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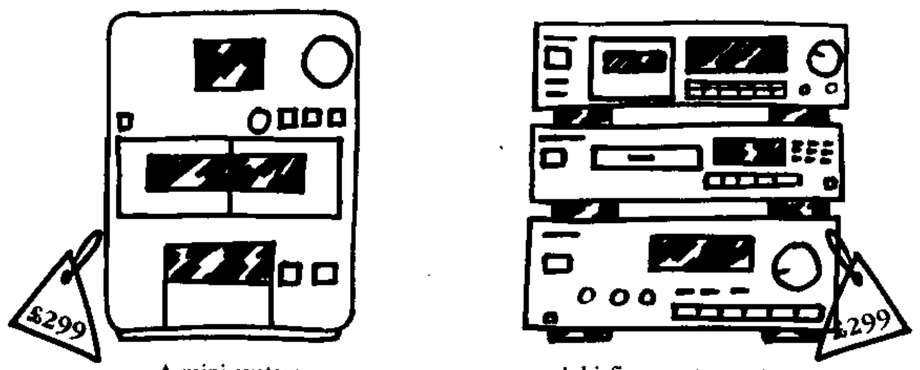

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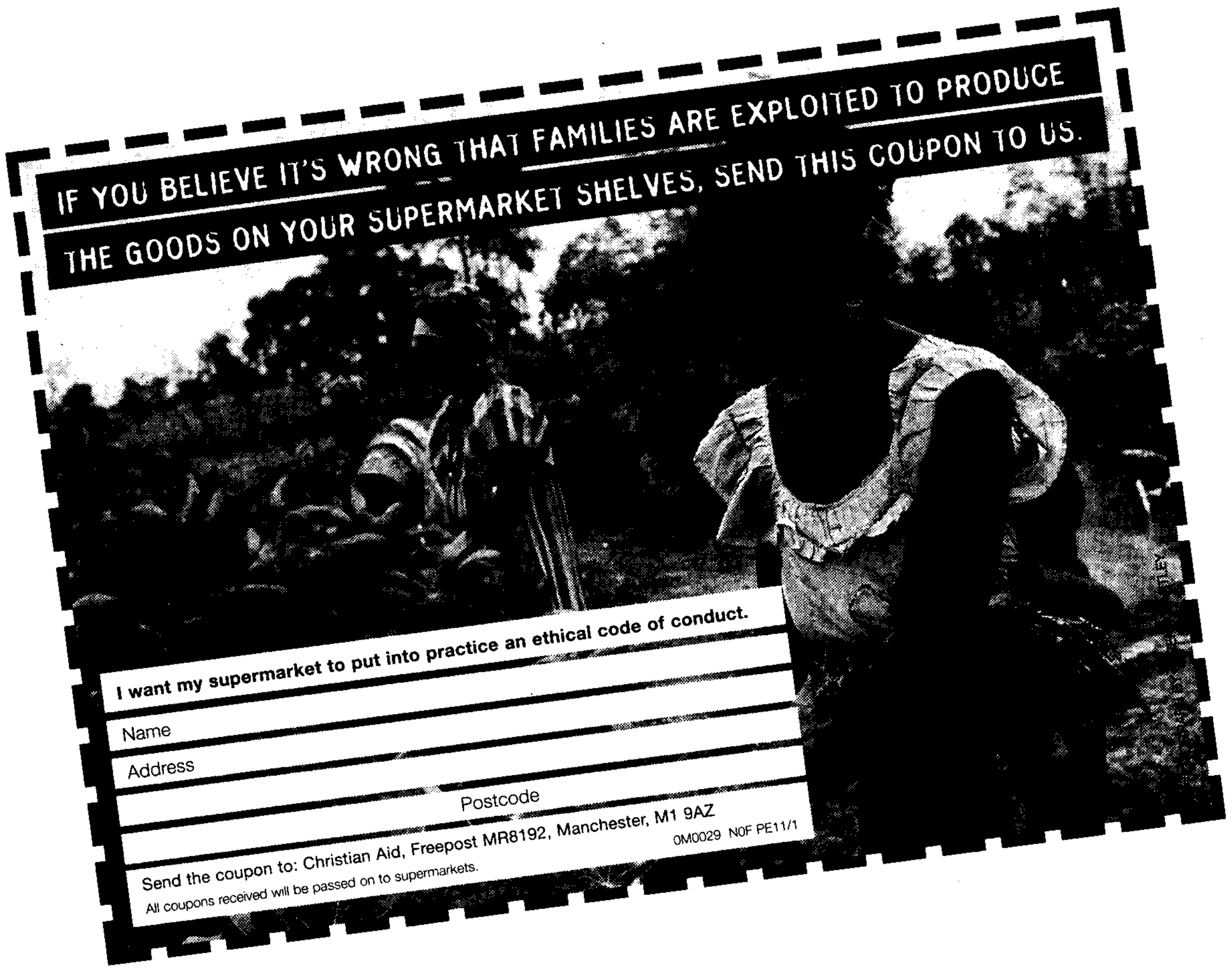
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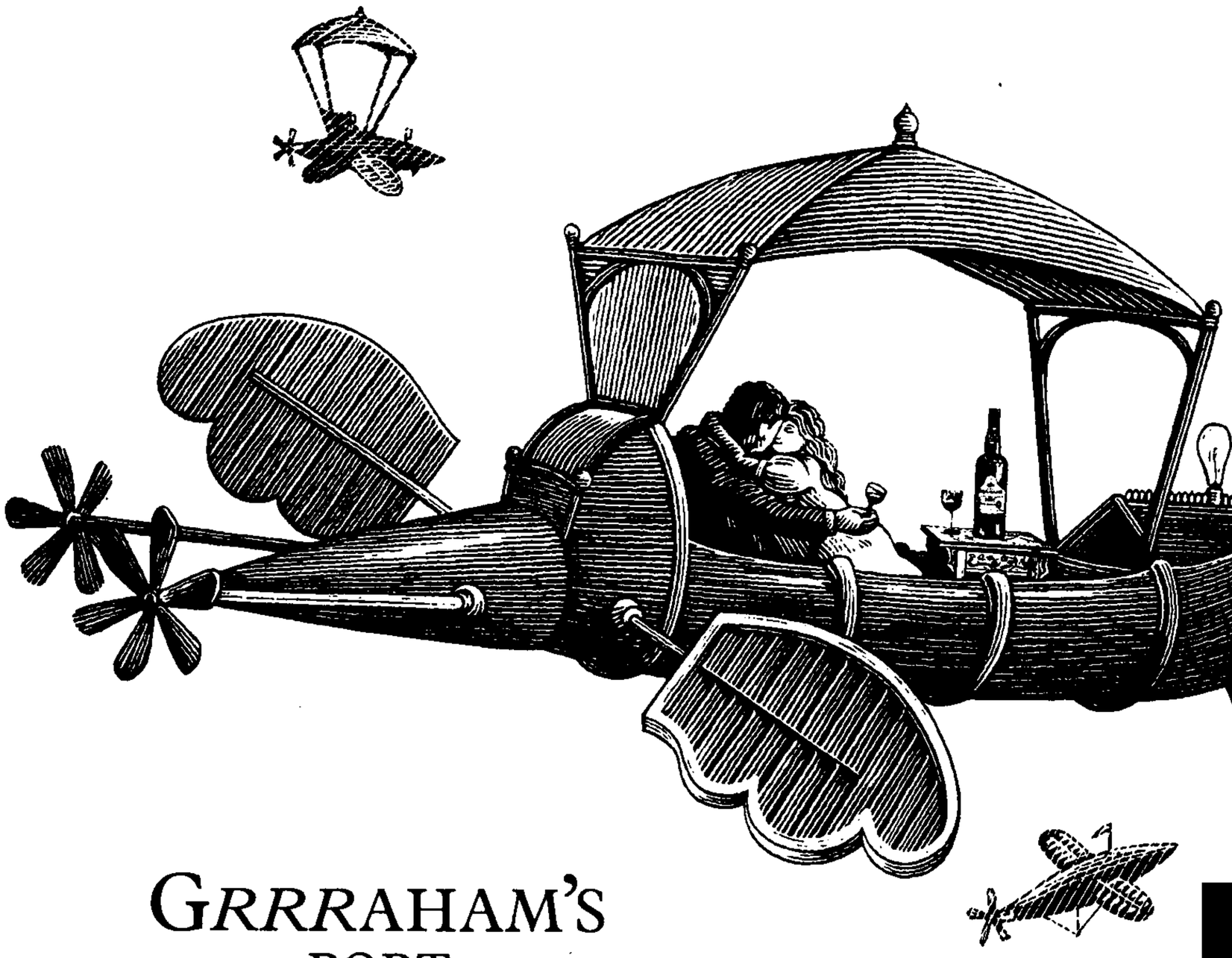

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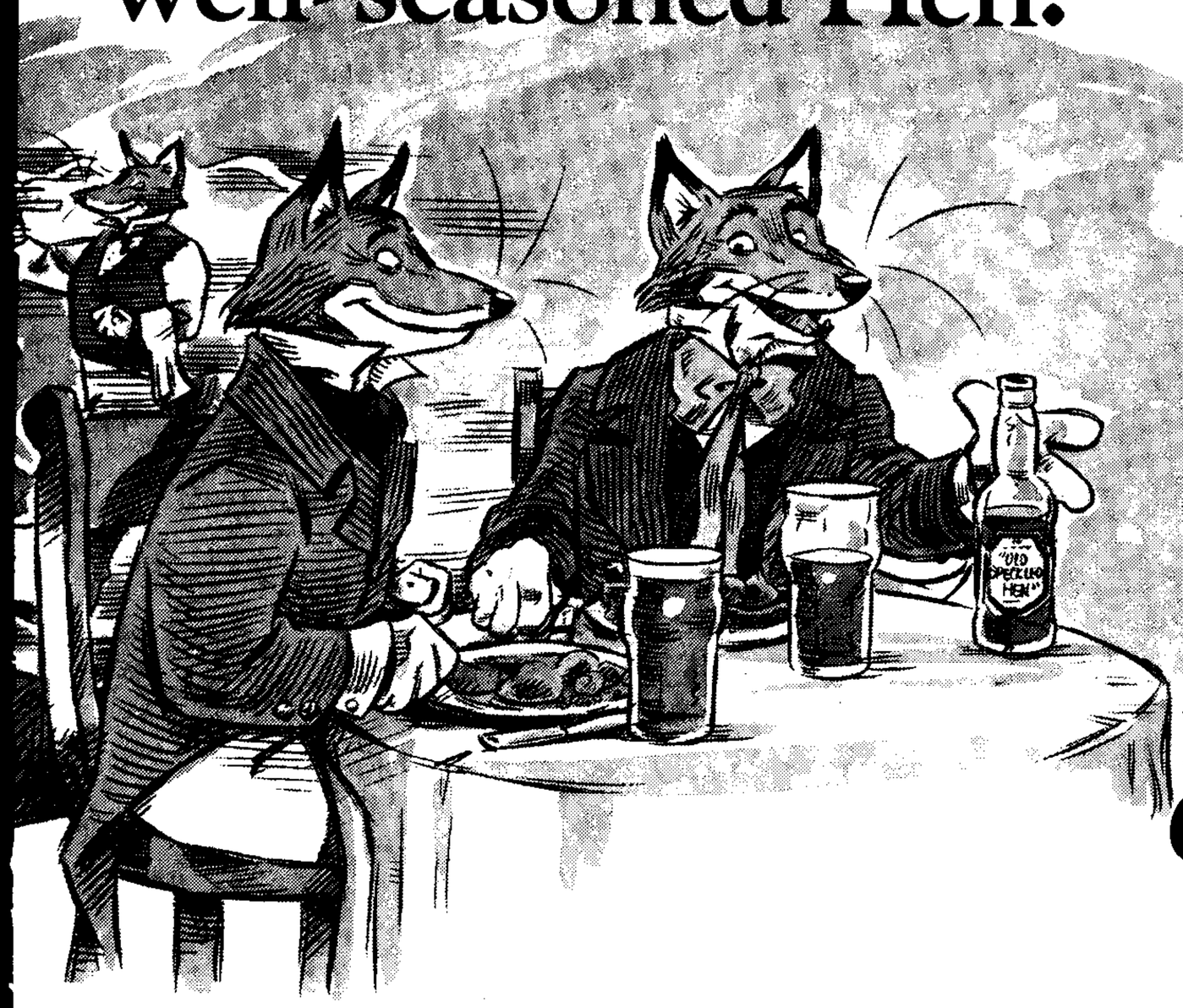

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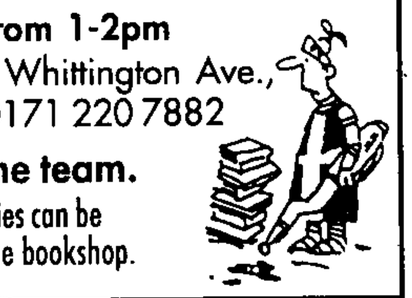

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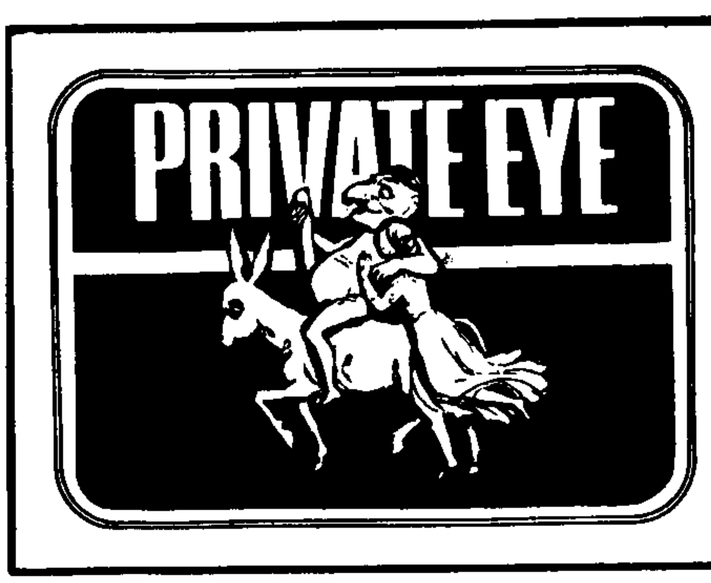


COLOUR SECTION

THE collapse of the libel case brought by Mohamed Fayed against the American magazine *Vanity Fair* has heightened the interest of the British press in the extra-curricular activities of the Harrods boss and his family.

Old and rather juicy stories, which for reasons impossible to understand have been put away to rot, have been taken out and dusted down. Chief among these is the extraordinary allegation, followed up and effectively proved by a wide selection of the British media, that Fayed and his security chief, former top Scotland Yard detective John McNamara, arranged for a "tail" to be put on Michael Portillo when the latter was secretary of state for defence.

The "tail" involved an Essex private detective and a former police photographer. Portillo was secretly followed and filmed all round southern England without any of his official minders noticing, let alone protesting. MI5, which prides itself on its on ability to bug and burgle anyone they please, either knew nothing about it (the most likely alternative) or, if they did, took no action.

The mystery is not so much how Fayed arranged this espionage but how he got away with it without a word being published by the several newspapers that have the story. This is the real tribute to the Harrods boss's extraordinary influence in high society.

FURTHER remarkable proof of that is the failure to follow up the story, exclusively broken in *Scotland on Sunday* on 16 November, of Fayed's brother Salah and the crack cocaine.

Four and a half years ago, Salah and a "secretary" (a Harrods trainee) took a plane to Aberdeen where they hired a taxi to take them to Mohamed's stately home, Balnagown Castle north of Inverness.

On his way back from this huge journey, the taxi driver noticed a leather bag in the back and handed it in to Elgin police. It contained some crack cocaine and the necessary equipment (pipe, etc) for consuming it. As soon as the police started making inquiries, the Fayed public relations operation went into overdrive. All sorts of important people appeared on the scene, including the former commissioner of the Metropolitan police, Sir David McNee. McNee, who had recommended John McNamara as the best man to look after Fayed's security, told *Scotland on Sunday* that he had been asked to advise on the application to the case of Scottish law ("that was all", he said).

An Elgin detective went to the castle and was kept waiting for half an hour before being told that the substances in the bag were the property of Salah's "secretary". She in turn admitted they were entirely hers, and that Salah knew nothing about them.

The detective promptly asked her to demonstrate how to use the cocaine pipe and was not impressed with her performance. Nor could she explain how the contents of the bag were hers when there was enough money in it to pay a Harrods trainee for many moons. Suddenly the case was transferred from Elgin to Aberdeen where a decision was finally made not to take the matter any further. A statement to *Scotland on Sunday* from the crown office in Edinburgh gave no indication whatever why the matter should have been so mysteriously closed and covered up.

The *Scotland on Sunday* story was surely a case for massive media follow-up: a perfect opportunity for, say, the *Daily Express* to vent its fury against "kid gloves for drug-takers". Salah's "secretary" might well have been tracked down — she is now a British Airways air hostess and has been very well looked after by the Fayed family. But once again, from the big bold British press, and especially from the *Telegraph* papers which are constantly sneering at the *Guardian* for attacking Neil Hamilton and not his paymaster, not a word.

THE range and fury of Fayed's enemies are well illustrated in the introduction to *The Liar*, this week's new Penguin book by three *Guardian* journalists on the fall and fall of Jonathan Aitken.

The book reveals that Prince Mohammed, son and heir of the king of Saudi Arabia, was so enraged by the Granada programme about Aitken's pimping for the Saudi dynasty that he gave Aitken's wife a bag full of at least a hundred thousand dollars to start a libel action. "Get Fayed!" was the prince's curious instruction to Aitken: proof positive that the Harrods guru has influential enemies even in Riyadh.

The story could have some significance on the outcome of the continuing argument about the costs of Aitken's disastrous libel action. Though the law has changed in recent years, it still frowns on rich men who finance libel actions in which they are not directly involved. If the resulting libel action is lost, its rich promoters can be sued for some of the costs on the grounds of their "maintenance" of the action — or by way of the old common law of "champerty".

Eye readers will recall that Jonathan Aitken himself had recourse to the law of champerty in 1995, when creditors tried to sue him and others connected with the bust retail company Oasis Merchandising. The creditors borrowed money from a city financier to try to get their money back, but Aitken claimed this was "champertous" and, astonishingly, was upheld in the high court by Mr Justice Robert Walker — see "Sweet Champerty", *Eye* 878, 11 August 1995. Would the same law be applied to the Saudi prince who financed Aitken's libel action? For an answer, look up the figures for the British arms trade with Saudi Arabia.

WILL someone now summon the courage to publish a book about the phoney pharaoh?

There's certainly no shortage of authors eager to take him on. In recent months at least three eminent hacks — Maxwell biographer Tom Bower, *Spectator* pundit Stephen Glover and *Sindie* reporter Chris "Beanhead" Blackhurst — have separately drawn up proposals for unofficial tomes about the mendacious Mohamed. They all discovered, however, that London publishing houses were curiously uninterested.

Is this because the publishers are terrified of libel writs? Or perhaps because they are even more terrified of having their wares banished from the Harrods book department?

More Fayed... more Aitken... ☛

"Mmm... that filled a hole"

NEWS

IN THE meantime, what has happened to the police inquiry into Aitken's perjury in the libel action?

Five months of investigations have still not produced a result, although the perjury would seem to be easy to prove — by comparing Aitken's sworn evidence about his and his family's movements during his famous visit to the Ritz in 1993 with what he knew actually took place.

Scotland Yard says its inquiries are being conducted by the organised crime group "because of its expertise in gathering evidence from abroad". A sledgehammer to crack a nut, surely? Unless of course the organised crime group is also interested in the more profound allegations under the surface of the *Guardian* book: that Aitken took huge commissions from the Al Yamamah arms contract between Britain and Saudi Arabia and went on enjoying those commissions when he was John Major's minister in charge of the arms trade from 1992 to 1994.

Could the police be investigating perhaps the most serious allegation of political corruption made against any minister since the war? For an answer, look up the figures for the British arms trade with Saudi Arabia.

YET more evidence of the boundless generosity of Mohamed Fayed: a worker on the phoney pharaoh's 34,000-acre Balnagown estate in Scotland has been describing how he was sacked after taking his first day off in two years from his seven-day-a-week job.

Matt Elliot, a £6,000-a-year gamekeeper, took a day off last May to visit his son in Lancashire. As soon as he returned, estate manager Tom Coyle — a former Harrods security man — arrived on his doorstep with a posse of minders to change the locks and ordered Elliot to get out at once.

"I think what they did was harsh in the extreme," Elliot told the *Inverness Courier* earlier this month. "They said it was gross misconduct but it was the first day off I had since my son's wedding two years ago. I can't understand their actions." Clearly, news of Fayed's imperious management style has yet to reach the Highlands.

Elliot, a 56-year-old father of three, sued for unfair dismissal, but then accepted an out-of-court settlement of £4,500 moments before the case was due to be heard three weeks ago. "I am just the little man and they are the big guns," he explained to the *Courier*. "My lawyer warned me that to continue the struggle at the tribunal could cost me £2,000 in legal fees so I reluctantly agreed to settle." He revealed that his boss had just spent £3,000 on a tree-house for the Fayed children at Balnagown.

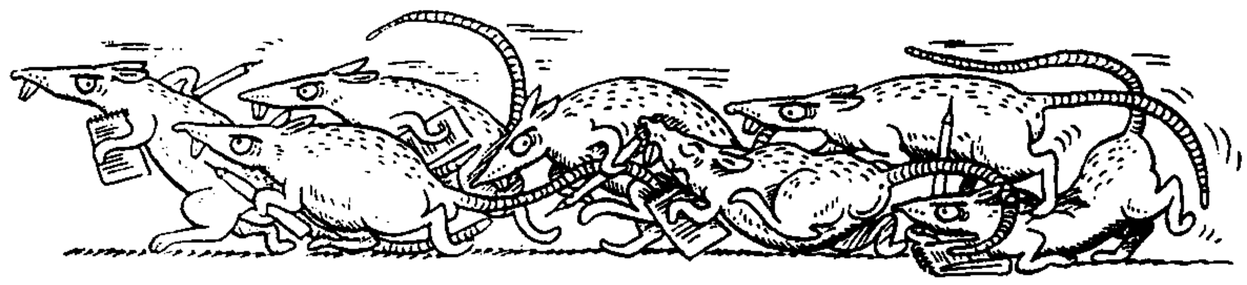
"What is my £4,500 to them? Nothing! I am now jobless and getting on in years. At my age work is hard to find. I feel that I have been badly treated by my employer after years of loyal service."

Many former Harrods staff will know the feeling only too well.

BARBARA CASSANI made it to the front page of the *Guardian* on 18 November as a representative of the "new breed of go-getting have-it-all American women who tightened their grip on power among Britain's top companies". She is the new head of British Airways' "new no-frills airline" Operation Blue Sky.

So full were the papers with such guff they simply had no room to refer to Barbara Cassani's role in British Airways sales department during the famous dirty tricks operation against BA's competitors.

Cassani collected and assessed information about other airlines (such as Virgin's punctuality at Gatwick) which BA's "helpliners" secretly hacked out of their competitors computers. She appears twice in Martin Gregory's book *Dirty Tricks* — now forced off the shelves after a successful libel action by Brian Basham, shortly to be heard at the court of appeal.



STREET OF SHAME

SIR Patrick Neill QC, the new public standards watchdog who told the government to repay £1m to Bernie Ecclestone, has been able to study ethical standards in his other role.

For the past nine years he has been an independent director of Times Newspapers, safeguarding the editors from interference by their proprietor, Rupert Murdoch. Hmm.

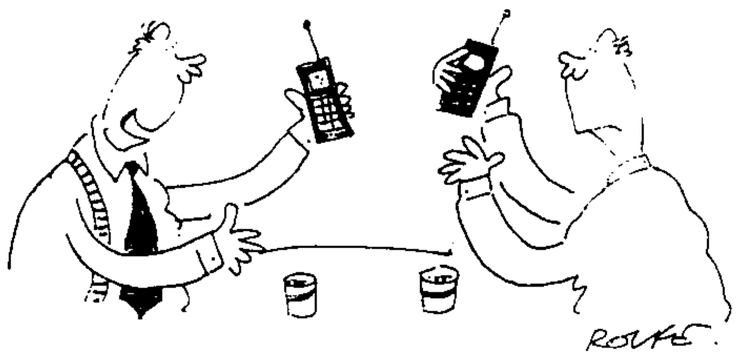
THE *Express*'s political pundit Peter Oborne, formerly a great favourite of right-wing Tories such as Peter Lilley, has adjusted to "new" Labour with impressive ease.

At the height of the Bernie Ecclestone scandal, on Friday 14 November, he wrote a column protesting at the "deeply unfair" attacks on the PM. "There is nothing shoddy or corrupt about Tony Blair," he thundered. "His decision to give Formula One a reprieve from the ban on tobacco sponsorship was made on a hard-headed assessment of the national interest... It shows he has got what it takes to become a great Prime Minister."

The next day, Downing Street press officer Alastair Campbell gave a telephone briefing to lobby hacks from the Sunday papers via a "conference call" at the end of which he asked Oborne to "stay on the line while the rest of you put your phones down".

Once no one else was listening, Campbell told the *Express* man that Tony Blair was immensely grateful for his support — and said that, as a reward for Oborne's loyalty beyond the call of duty, Tony Blair would write an exclusive article for the following day's *Express*.

No doubt the *Express*'s proprietor Lord Hollick will be equally impressed by Oborne's shameless brown-nosing. When not running his supposedly independent newspapers, Hollick works as a "special adviser" to the new government.



"... but does yours tell you that you can't get a signal in colour?"

CHILLING rumours are sweeping Canary Wharf that Mohamed Fayed has been making discreet inquiries about buying a major stake in the Mirror Group.

Whispers suggest this may explain the otherwise inexplicable amount of space and credibility which several MGN papers — the *Sindie*, the *People* and the *Sunday Mirror* — have recently given to conspiracy theories suggesting that the Princess of Wales and Dodi Fayed were assassinated by the British or Israeli intelligence services. (One consequence of these theories is to deflect attention from Dodi's rash decision to order boozed-up, drugged-up chauffeur Henri Paul to drive through Paris at lunatic speed.)

The phoney pharaoh has long yearned to be a press baron — though his attempts to buy *Today* and the *Observer* were rebuffed, leaving him with the booby prize of *Punch*. As one *Mirror* hack commented on hearing the news: "This place was almost destroyed by one fat, lying egomaniac who regarded it as his personal propaganda sheet. Surely they can't let another one through the door?"

We shall see.

***SUNDAY MIRROR* editor Bridget "Death" Rowe returned from holiday two weeks ago to hear rumours that David "Rommel" Montgomery had offered her job to someone else.**

At first she refused to believe it. "I've been very clever," she pointed out. "I've sacked everyone who could possibly edit the paper, so no one can replace me." But she soon learnt this was not so, and several colleagues had indeed been sounded out by Rommel during her absence.

Until now la Rowe thought she was impregnable — not only because she'd sacked every potential rival but also because she is privy to certain facts which could embarrass Montgomery were they ever to get out.

One is the amazing (and highly secret) arrangement whereby freelance hackette Sharon Feinstein is paid an annual retainer of more than £70,000 for just two features a month (or about £3,000 per article) — at a time when the going rate for a two-page spread is well under £1,000, and editors have been banned from spending more than £250 on any story without Rommel's permission.

More amazingly still, Feinstein's stipend is topped up by other lavish fees — in return for providing celebrities' telephone numbers and suchlike — which take her earnings over £100,000. This lucrative contract, supervised by Rowe herself, makes Feinstein by far the best paid journalist on the paper in spite of her low productivity.

It is of course pure coincidence that Sharon Feinstein is an ex-lover of David Montgomery and the mother of his first child.

Some Mirror Group executives believe that Rommel himself is unaware of the contract. Even so, if Bridget ever spilled the beans he might have to face a few awkward questions from Mirror Group shareholders.

But then again their wrath may be even greater if he *doesn't* sack Rowe. During the past few months MGN has spent about £10m on promoting the *Sunday Mirror* and increasing its pagination. Now the results are in: sales have fallen by 8.5 percent in the past year — far more than any other Sunday tabloid — and are only just over two million. Once they fall below that mark, as they surely will on present trends, the Mirror Group will be forced to pay huge sums in compensation to advertisers, who book space on the understanding circulation stays above two million.

No wonder "Death" Rowe is in a panic. She is currently negotiating a divorce from her husband — who, since he has stayed at home and brought up their child while she has been conquering London, will be entitled to large maintenance payments and a fair share of the spoils. If she doesn't pay up, the Child Support Agency will hunt her down.

Oddly enough, the *Sunday Mirror* has recently run a series of pieces attacking the agency, plus a separate series by top solicitor Vanessa Lloyd-Platt about the iniquity of making successful women subsidise house-husbands who have cared for their children. When not writing for the *Sunday Mirror*, Vanessa Lloyd-Platt is... Bridget Rowe's divorce lawyer.

THE curse of *Hello!* continues... In the 15 November issue, the glossy mag printed a charming double page spread on the Spice girls, uncritically singing their praises and revealing the complex Spice philosophy (explained "Geri": "Fundamentally we are all alike. Think of Prince Charles, a homeless person, yourself, Mahatma Gandhi... and they all want one thing: to be healthy and have fun.")

Within days, naturally, the newspapers were full of the great Spice crisis — "Geri" firing manager Simon Fuller, who was having an affair with "Baby" Spice, who was given one hour to decide between career and lover. Like Gandhi, just having fun.

THE great social commentator Nigel Pratt Dumpster has found a novel way of filling endless columns in the *Daily Mail*: revealing a story one week, then knocking it down the following week.

In February this year Dumpster announced breathlessly that Earl Spencer had a new girlfriend: Josie Borain of Cape Town. Then on 5 November Dumpster brought his readers this happy news: "Beautiful former New York fashion model Josie Borain, 33, the Johannesburg-born Calvin Klein muse who helped comfort Earl Spencer, also 33, during the darkest hours of his sister's death, is back on his arm after a short break in their seven-month relationship."

Only six days later, however, in another lead item Dumpster lashed the "foolish *Express*" for thinking there was a romance and sternly told his confused disciples: "Despite being escorted by Earl Spencer to Nelson Mandela's state reception for Prince Charles last week, Cape Town fashion editor Josie Borain has made it clear her romance with the Princess of Wales's brother is definitely over."

Clear?

EARL SPENCER himself had a nasty moment in London recently when lunching at the fashionable Kensington Place restaurant. Almost immediately behind him was a table of raucous merry-makers: none other than the *Daily Mail*'s Peter McLie, the great gossip columnist Nigel Pratt-Dumpster and the legendary New York-based freeloader and drunken hack Anthony Hayden-Guest.

Fellow diners observed Spencer constantly glancing in the wall-length mirror in horrified fascination at this appalling trio. Perhaps this was because they confirmed everything he has denounced about the awfulness of the modern media.

On the other hand Spencer might have been terrified that Pratt Dumpster would rise and greet him fulsomely — thus revealing to the world that not so very long ago one of Dumpster's best contacts (and a frequent caller to his "diary") was none other than the great defender of privacy from the press!

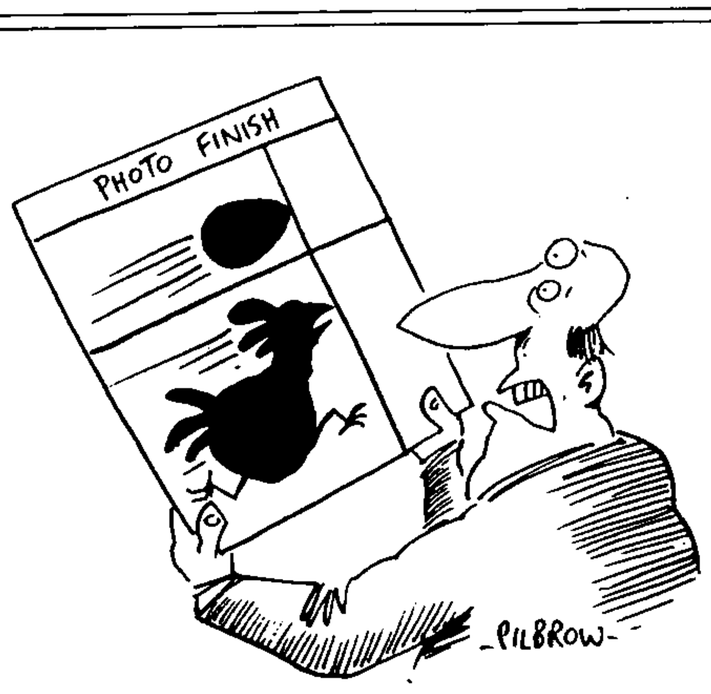
Fortunately for Spencer the two fell out some time ago. Dumpster remained at his table, where naturally huge quantities of champagne and brandy were being guzzled in the finest traditions of investigative journalism.

THE ORIGIN of the word "ok" made the front page of the *Daily Telegraph* recently after Charles Pretzlik, the paper's New York hack, revealed that "it stems from the nickname of a president, according to a new book".

Pretzlik revealed that the book's authors had traced the saying back to the presidential race of 1840 when the incumbent, Martin Van Buren, was known as Old Kinderhook, or OK, after his home town.

This saying "has long baffled historians", insisted Pretzlik. Which is a bit odd. If they had looked in the Collins English Dictionary they would have found "OK, o.k., okay [C19: perhaps after the O.K. Club (founded in 1840 by supporters of Martin Van Buren for US president), from Old Kinderhook, Van Buren's birthplace in New York]".

Another great *Telegraph* exclusive!



FLEET STREET outdid itself in hypocrisy following the death of Lady Tryon. More commonly known as "Kanga", for many years tabloids gloatingly referred to her as "the Prince of Wales's other happily-married confidante".

Now they have shed crocodile tears over her recent "mental collapse." But many locals near her home at Great Durnford, Wiltshire, have been asking if "Kanga" was as crackers as she was made out. Or if she was just desperately lonely.

The once ebullient Australian socialite had indeed harboured a hopeless love for Brian, and a severe jealousy of Camilla. At the time of her death, Lord Tryon had been suing for divorce on the grounds of her unreasonable behaviour, but the decree absolute had not yet been granted. What, some now wonder, will happen to Kanga's assets?

One who will be very interested in this is Alistair Mackillop, who runs Access for Justice — an organisation which helps those who believe they have been improperly sectioned, and with whom Lady Tryon had lodged many documents before her death.

BIRTHDAY girls in the buff are a *Sunday Sport* speciality, but the *Eye*'s query about the inclusion of models on their 16th birthday — whose photographs must have been taken when they were 15 and still minors — has led to a flurry of police activity.

In a letter to MPs Sir Paul Condon has confirmed that his assistant commissioner is looking into demands for the paper to be prosecuted for publishing paedophile pictures.

Sunday Sport editor-in-chief Tony Livesey cheerfully denies any wrongdoing. But what does he mean? Either he thinks it's all right to publish obscene photos of a minor in his rag, or he is duping his one-armed readers by printing pictures of 18-year-old topless models with entirely fictitious birthday captions. Surely not?

JUST FANCY THAT!

"Louise [Woodward] was no stranger to coping with babies."

— The *Sun*, 1 November, page 5.

"Louise had absolutely no experience in working with babies."

— The *Sun*, 1 November, page 6.

SPECTATOR editor Frank Johnson has been privately canvassing opinion for some months as to whether he should get rid of his namesake, demented columnist Paul "Loonybins" Johnson.

At the same time Loonybins has been loudly proclaiming at dinner parties in west London that Frank isn't up to the job of editing the *Speccie*, citing his irredeemable lack of seriousness and character.

Understandably riled, Frank was about to make his move against Paul — when things were complicated by Conrad Black falling in love with Tony Blair at a *Telegraph* dinner last week. The prime minister, at his most charming, complimented the *Spectator* proprietor for the useful advice he had given him over the years.

No one was more delighted than Paul Johnson, who regards himself as Tony's chief mentor and spiritual counsellor. With Conrad now in the Blair camp, Paul appears to be unsackable. But can the same be said for Frank?

And, for that matter, how long will it be before the *Spectator*'s political editor Bruce "Brute" Anderson lands himself in trouble? He was on typical form recently when he opposed the Oxford Union motion: "This House would allow gays into the armed services."

Evidently traumatised by his crushing defeat at the hands of Pater Tatchell (266 votes for, 67 against), afterwards he proceeded to get uncharacteristically pissed. First Anderson put an arm round the (black) president of the Union, Sam Gyimah of Sommerville College, telling him: "I normally hate black blokes, but you're OK." Later, he had to be assisted back to his hotel, the Randolph.

As his long-suffering helpers departed into the night the distinguished *Spectator* pundit shouted: "Goodnight... cunts."

THE TROLLOP, THE LOVER AND THE WOMAN SCORNED

THE business of the press, according to the great *Times* editor John Thaddeus Delane, is disclosure. Some modern editors have a rather different motto: the business of the press is to try to suppress facts that have already been published to an audience of millions.

Last week the *Daily Mail* ran a series of "compellingly candid" articles by PR woman Fiona Duff describing how her husband, "a top British TV producer", had run off with a "well-known 25-year-old writer" whom she denounced as a trollop. All most compelling, but not very candid. For the *Mail* did not name the husband or the mistress, noting merely that "those in the media will know who they are".

The identities would also be known to every reader of the *Daily Express*, which had run a prominent story more than two weeks earlier revealing that "Harry Thompson, 37, the astonishingly successful producer of television sports quiz *They Think It's All Over*... has left his wife, publicist Fiona Duff, and moved in with writer Victoria Coren, 25, daughter of humorist Alan".

After the first instalment of Duff's series appeared in the *Mail*, the *Sun* also filled in the details, thus adding another few million to the number of those "in the know". Almost the only people kept in ignorance, it seemed, were readers of the *Mail*.

Why? One theory is that la Duff, knowing Thompson's insatiable appetite for publicity, decided that the cruellest punishment she could inflict was to write about him at length without mentioning his name.

The *Guardian*, unlike the *Mail*, had no contractual obligations to the jilted wife. Yet when hackette Maureen Freely wrote a why-oh-why piece for the *Grauniad* about the affair, editor Alan Rusbridger imposed an even more bizarre censorship by insisting that Duff herself couldn't be named either — even though her byline and photograph had been all over the *Mail*.

"In her kiss and tell account of her husband's 'heartless infidelity', Kate — let's call her Kate — does not name names," Freely announced coyly, "but then again, she doesn't have to..." Indeed not: but since Duff's name was already in the public domain — at her instigation — why pretend it was secret?

No doubt Rusbridger has reasons of his own for being so overprotective. Some *Grauniad* hacks fear that if his mania for privacy goes much further, we can soon expect to see news stories starting: "The Prime Minister — let's call him Geoffrey — said last night..."

TAKI's recent *Spectator* column surpassed all previous efforts to eulogise his "friend" Sir Jammy Fishpaste.

It was written on the occasion of Goldsmith's memorial, and Taki noted that he had been to a few memorials in his time "but nothing like this".

"Thatcher and Kissinger praised Jimmy for his courage, intelligence and generosity," Taki swooned. How strange then that Taki, Goldsmith's most fervent admirer, should be spotted checking his watch and leaving the event half an hour before it finished.

SELF-PROMOTING *Telegraph* hack William Cash, son of the Europhobic Tory MP, has long made a meal of his friendship with actress Liz Hurley. But he recently told the *Evening Standard* that he and Sudeley Castle-owner Henry Dent-Brocklehurst were writing a self-help book for the upper classes with Hurley. This, it seems, may herald the end of a beautiful friendship.

Cash explained to the *Standard*: "There's a whole chapter on Tantric sex, which I, Henry and Elizabeth are very much into. Liz is helping with the research."

Ms Hurley has now written a stiff letter to the LA-based hack, instructing him to cease such absurd claims, and has let it be known to friends that she thinks Cashing-in is "a pain in the arse."

WILLIAM HAGUE's willingness to attack the evil capitalists who make corporate donations to Labour owes much to his own party's humiliation during the Scottish devolution campaign.

As *Eye* 933 revealed, none of the tobacco companies who traditionally support the Tories gave cash or poster sites. In all previous post-war elections, billboards advertising cigarette products were made freely available to the party, ensuring a publicity blitz Labour could never afford to match.

But this year, without tobacco company support, Hague's "Vote No" posters only appeared where the Tories could afford to pay for them: ie, one in Edinburgh and two in Glasgow. Given that the tobacco manufacturers want a single currency, Hague has no chance of regaining their support at the next election so has little to lose by criticising Tony Blair's generosity to Formula One.

WHEN Labour communications chief David Hill initially denied the BBC Nick Jones story that Labour had been given a "bernie" by Formula One's Bernie Ecclestone, he may have been telling the truth.

Nervous party fundraisers have also been keen to back up the original Hill version of events. This is because a) they claim they did not know about the "bung"; and b) this was because Bernie's £1m went straight into a blind trust and not to the Labour party.

This could mean that a) Tony Blair had no idea Bernie had bunged a bernie when he met with the representatives of Formula One; or b) that Tony Blair did know and that the trust was not quite as blind as all had been led to believe. Either way don't expect Sir Patrick Neill's Commons standards committee to dig too deeply: the Tories' massive pre-election overdraft was cleared in much the same way, and neither of the parties could survive long in the brave new world of looming election spending caps without alternative means of laundering dosh.

JACQUI LAIT, Piers Merchant's replacement as Tory MP for Beckenham, told voters she came to them with the "blessing and support" of her former constituents in Hastings and Rye.

Indeed, so much did they miss her in her last seat that the *Hastings and St Leonards Observer* had to double the size of its letters page after the general election to accommodate the stream of letters echoing the "Thank God she's out" theme.

Sadly the paper must have lacked space to print the reams of condolences.

"Trust me, I'm a pretty straight guy!"

TONY & RUPERT SPECIAL

TONY BLAIR's caving in to Formula One may have less to do with Bernie Ecclestone and his million quid and more to do with the prime minister's big obsession: helping keep Rupert Murdoch's business options open, less the increasingly Desperate Digger withdraws support from Labour.

Though Murdoch's BSkyB has shown only limited interest in motor racing, other parts of the News Corp's global tv empire do cover the sport and Murdoch would be most displeased at any interference from a democratically elected government — least of all one he publicly endorsed at the last election.

Globally speaking, Murdoch of course is a very worried man: more nervous now than at any time in the five or so years since his narrow escape from corporate meltdown.

He has sold parts of his empire (including a large chunk of his original investment in BSkyB) and mortgaged much of the rest (especially the cash-generating British newspaper interests) to expand his international presence. But rising interest rates could easily coincide with an economic downturn, and nervous bankers could demand asset sales at low prices, risking the start of a spiral which could make the group vulnerable to takeover.

Worries that base rates will continue to increase following European monetary union partly explain the huge anti-EMU coverage currently running in the *Sun* on a daily basis. But a more immediate threat comes from the economic downturn in so-called emerging markets. Murdoch's assets are heavily pledged as collateral for loans to establish businesses in Asia (particularly the Star satellite service), Japan (a local version of Sky) and Latin America (tv and film interests).

Recent events mean the book value of these assets has crashed, subscription fees and advertising payments heavily reduced when translated from devalued local currencies into dollars or sterling, and the number of potential subscribers has fallen due to the poor economic outlook. Judging by what's happening to the financial markets in Asia (Tokyo in particular), Murdoch's pain is likely to continue for months if not years ahead.

Even when he has a hit, cash flow may not materialise. Estimates for the total production cost of James Cameron's *Titanic* range from $225m to $280m. Whatever the figure, it's the most expensive movie ever made even before marketing and distribution are taken into account. Paramount, which co-produced the film, shrewdly limited its exposure to just $60m in return for American rights, but Fox is left with the rest of the bill and is unlikely to make a return on its investment. With executives making decisions like that, against an increasingly difficult economic background, it's no wonder Murdoch is edgy — and that Blair is anxious not to make things worse for him.

ALARMED at the roasting of Harriet Harman during last week's parliamentary Labour party meeting, the spin doctors promptly faxed the Press Association a ludicrous tale about how Labour MPs "welcomed Harriet's proposals" to cut back lone parent benefit and "how well she had been received" etc, etc.

Furious Labour MPs then phoned the *Grauniad* to reveal that 17 MPs had attacked Harman's penny pinching measure, inherited from Peter Lilley and something that she herself had shown great vigour in opposing at the time.

Knowing that Harpie would come under fire, Labour whips had taken the precaution of marshalling a dragoon of "new" Labour Stepford wives, who at the appropriate moment could be switched on to deliver dalek-like homilies for the beleaguered minister. First up was Don Valley MP Caroline Flint, a humourless harpie drone who proceeded to lecture her astonished colleagues on the necessity of cutting benefits to single mums.

"My mother was a single mother," the flint-hearted creature intoned, "and I was a single mother. But we chose to work hard." In a previous existence Flint was in fact a well paid union officer, so she is no doubt well qualified to lecture the poor about working hard.

MORE trouble at t'pit for energy minister John Battle, who is accused of sitting on his hands while Britain's rump coal industry gets smaller and smaller (*Eyes passim*).

At Drax power station in Yorkshire, not a million miles from Battle's Leeds West constituency, National Power is carrying out trials by burning petcoke. Petcoke contains traces of heavy metals including nickel, which have been linked to cancer.

A recent "open day" at the power station failed to impress people living near the plant who are worried at reports that the fuel — a cheap by-product of the US oil industry — produces 20 times more pollution than locally-mined coal. The trouble is, unless the minister acts to defend the coal industry, there won't be any locally-mined coal with which to compare petcoke.

MORE from EDS, the Texan computer giant with a foothold in almost every UK government department.

Its highest profile contract to date is to install the new tax "self-assessment" programme at the Inland Revenue. The installation is already running millions of pounds over-budget and over-time.

Meanwhile in Canada, having spent $365m to automate the country's income-security system, the Canadian government is terminating its contract with EDS. The project couldn't meet its 1998 deadline and would have cost millions more to finish. The Canadians now intend to complete the project on their own.

"I cannot develop my policy any further, sir: I did chop down that tree"

JOHN MAJOR is having a new lease of life. Drinking in the Commons' smoking room with Labour's naughty MP Helen Brinton, he was surprised to be disturbed by another new Labourite, Brian Donohue.

Donohue asked Major to sign a book he had with him called *Major Achievements*, but the Scotsman produced only a book full of blank covers. Major rose above this "joke" with his normal charm and bought Donohue a pint. How unfortunate that beer from the glass managed to spill all over the table and on to Donohue's suit! Is it No More Mr Nice Guy?

PS: Was John Major really the best man to look after the interests of the princes? Remember the adjective Diana herself used about him and his government's attitude to an international ban on land mines? "Hopeless".

WHAT connects Labour MPs Lorna Fitzsimons, Jim Murphy, Stephen Twigg and Jack Straw? All were once presidents of the National Union of Students.

Strangely, most of this motley crew seem keen to play down their glory days in the union. Of the four, only Straw mentions his reign over the NUS in the career section of the Vacher Dods parliamentary companion. The rest all disclose that they were directors of Endsleigh Insurance for a year or two (which is attached to the NUS), but say nothing about their presidency.

Endsleigh Insurance was recently exposed on TV's *Watchdog* as a company that rips students off — evidently the "new" Labour MPs are simply following the party line.

New Labour New Cliches

"Words speak louder than actions"

SHORN of his double-barrelled surname, the former John Austin-Walker MP (Walker was his wife's name), plain John Austin, Labour member for Erith & Thamesmead, appears to be trimming his spartist hatred of the Bosses System.

Members who still tremble at the memory of "Jaws", as he was known, addressing comrades at the Sinn Fein conference in Dublin and threatening retribution on the exploiting class, were surprised to receive a gold-leaf embossed invitation to a "champagne reception" Austin is hosting for Safeway Stores plc on 16 December.

No doubt Jaws will put the bite on the assembled grocers on behalf of downtrodden shelf stackers and checkout girls for whom Christmas will feature few flutes of champagne.

MORE on Gary Streeter, the South West Devon Tory MP who forgot to mention his connection with a law firm working for Plymouth City Airport when he enthusiastically backed the airport's development plans (*Eye* 912).

Streeter has apologised unreservedly to Labour Plymouth city councillor Tudor Evans, whom he had accused of financial misconduct last year. Streeter had made allegations in February 1996 that £5,000 had gone missing from a cooperative of which Evans was director.

Curiously, only a few months before that the Labour-led council had pursued a complaint about Streeter to the Solicitors' Complaints Bureau. The details of the complaint (later dismissed) about assets being transferred between companies were revealed at a full meeting of the city council by… Tudor Evans. Sour grapes, anyone?

JAPANESE AMBASSADOR LAYS WREATH

GOOD to see that Labour's commitment to open government reaches right into the office of prime minister Tony Blair.

When his parliamentary private secretary Ann Coffey was asked by one of her Stockport constituents how much public money had been spent on the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales she replied: "My view is that whatever was spent was spent with the goodwill of the British people. I therefore see the information as irrelevant and will not be pursuing the matter on your behalf."

And in Shrewsbury and Atcham, MP Paul Marsden has been doing wonders for the free flow of information after a piece appeared in the *Shropshire Star* concerning a driving incident in which his wife had been involved.

Michelle Marsden was charged with causing death by driving dangerously and remanded on bail to await a jury trial. David Williams, 86, had been a passenger on a bus which Mrs Marsden's car had hit. He died in hospital from injuries sustained in the accident.

The report was taken directly from her appearance in open court, but it wasn't the accuracy of the piece Marsden objected to: he was furious it had appeared at all. He phoned the paper's editor, and shortly afterwards staff were issued with a memo instructing them that "no journalist should contact him [Marsden] asking for comments on any subject until further notice" as he was now refusing point-blank to cooperate with his local paper.

RUMOURS have been circulating barristers' chambers that the replacement for treasury junior Stephen Richards, who's been been made a high court judge, will be employment law barrister Philip Sales. But surely this cannot be true?

Sales is not on the treasury list from which treasury juniors are normally chosen… But he is of course a prominent young barrister in the chambers of one Lord Irvine, lord chancellor and legal guru of Tony Blair.

'Backbiter'

YESTERDAY'S MEN

LET no one doubt how much Lord Archer of Weston-Super-Mare wants to reenter politics.

When journalist Imogen Wall was interviewing him for his local Cambridge newspaper she dared suggest that his political career had seen its final chapter. Lord Archer was vehement in his denial and demonstrated the point by asking Ms Wall to switch off her tape recorder — before putting his hands round her neck and shaking her, playfully of course.

The hackette was unscathed but very shaken by the experience, while the photographer accompanying her said that in 30 years in business she had never seen anything like Archer in interview — considering him rude, over-bearing and intimidating to the young reporter.

Lord Archer meanwhile dredged up his own example to demonstrate the law of comebacks. "Why shouldn't I follow Cecil Parkinson? He's ten years older than me!" The comparison stands well. Both men held positions in early Thatcher administrations and both suffered accusations of impropriety. But whereas Parkinson was forgiven his past misdemeanours and rehabilitated as party chairman, Archer, despite blatantly pitching for the job in press interviews, was not.

NEIL HAMILTON, popular entertainer and sometime MP, arrived at BBC Manchester on Remembrance Sunday to do a TV interview — but without a poppy.

Spotting a tray of poppies at the reception desk, he said: "Can I have one of those? I'll sort you out." The security guards duly put one on his jacket and directed him to the studio. Upon his return, instead of placing a small donation in the collection box, he simply removed the poppy from his lapel and put it in the tray.

Is this the first ever occasion on which the great freebie-fancier has actually handed back one of his ill-gotten gains?

HOW WALES WORKS

THOUGH Welsh secretary Ron Davies promised a bonfire of the quangos, many still remain under his control and that of the Taffia.

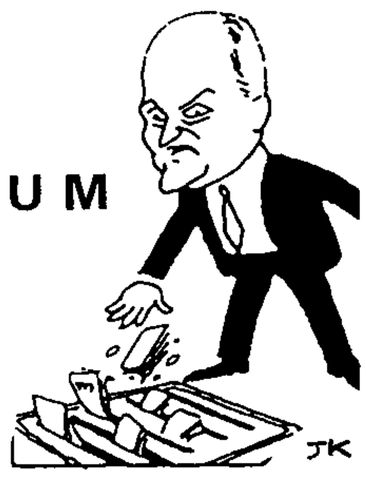
Davies recently appointed one Bryan Riddleston to the Countryside Council for Wales (£6,850pa for a 2.5 day month). CCW's job is to advise Davies on nature conservation, particularly sites of special scientific interest. But the appointment comes too late to help the Selar site, home of Britain's rarest native butterfly, the Marsh Fritillary. The site is about to be denotified after it was trashed by open-cast mining company, Celtic Energy.

Oddly enough Mr Riddleston used to run, er, Celtic Energy, and only stepped down as chief executive in 1996. He was kept on by the firm as a consultant, however, and has held on to his 25,000 shares in Celtic Holdings, parent company of… Celtic Energy.

Though Davies's Welsh office has now issued stricter guidelines on open-cast mining and the need for environmental assessment, if Ron wants extra advice he can always call on Huw Roberts, former director of public affairs at the electricity company SWALEC, whom he has recently appointed as a policy adviser.

Interestingly, SWALEC and Celtic Energy both use Golley Slater as PR consultants — as does Ron Davies's Welsh office.

REFERENDUM UPDATE



"THE death of Sir James Goldsmith was a tragic loss to all of us who knew and worked with him in the Referendum Party," Lord McAlpine wrote shortly before Sir Jams's recent memorial service. "We must now face the next stage of the campaign that he started without him. Our policy will remain unchanged."

Not so. The policy was in fact changed within hours of Goldsmith's death, when McAlpine and a few well-heeled cronies — Peter de Savary, John Aspinall, Taki, Andrew Roberts, etc — unilaterally decided to kill off the party and replace it with a new Referendum Movement.

Unlike its predecessor the movement has promised not to put up candidates in elections — not even the Euro-elections — and will in effect be little more than a pressure group within the Conservative party. To prove the point McAlpine promptly applied for the Tory whip in the House of Lords.

Although they claim to be "defending democracy", the McAlpine gang didn't bother to consult RP members. Without anything so vulgar as a ballot, they appointed McAlpine chairman, ex-Conservative Student Marc Glendinning as director and prize chump Patrick Robertson as secretary.

Unsurprisingly many former activists in the Goldsmith crusade are furious. The newsletter of the National Association of Referendum Party Supporters' Groups is peppered with complaints about McAlpine and Co. "The Statement of Aims of the Referendum Party indicated that it would dissolve itself after a fair referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union," one former parliamentary candidates writes. "It was on this basis that I and many others joined. To dissolve the party before such a referendum takes place would therefore be contrary to one of the party's stated aims… Foremost amongst those who would be betrayed would be Sir James himself."

The disgruntled activists are planning a conference in Birmingham in January to plan their campaigning for the next five years. As one told the *Eye*: "We're like Japanese soldiers in the jungle 30 years after Hiroshima: no one told us to stop fighting." They have already been threatened with lawsuits and injunctions by supporters of the rival faction — so at least one Goldsmithian tradition is being maintained.

FYE TV

BBC News 24
(some cable operators)

VIEWERS may have noticed strange things happening to the BBC's current affairs output during the summer. There was a rush of stand-in presenters way beyond the usual demands of the exodus of frontmen to Tuscany. Tight-mouthed former US correspondent Gavin Esler was frequently to be found hosting *Newsnight*, as was slow-voiced political correspondent Huw Edwards.

Then both men suddenly disappeared from the screen completely. Had they died? Had they been sacked? No — it was a fate worse than either of these. They were the main on-screen faces for News 24, the BBC's £30m round-the-clock news service. Their *Newsnight* stints had been autocue practice.

This means that, in a reversal of the usual procedure in theatre, the rehearsals were watched by an audience while the performance took place unseen by anyone. Awaiting the launch of digital television next year to be widely disseminated, Birt's CNN-wannabe for the moment can be seen only by a few subscribers to cable.

This is probably a good thing. During the first week of the service, a foreign viewer would have gained the impression that the phrase, "I'm, er, sorry, we don't seem to, er, have that yet" was as standard an expression in English as "please" or "thank you". On several other occasions, the screen suddenly displayed the computerised news "menu" for the bulletin that was underway: items were snappily summarised as "UN wrap", "student clashes" or "beaujolais", while columns alongside listed the length of the report and the agency or reporter from which the story had originated. Critics are divided over whether this unprecedented honesty about the news-editing process was deliberate post-modernism or a catastrophic crash of the system.

When the pictures are transmitted as intended, the viewer gets a lower-budget clone of the CNN/Sky News folks-at-a-desk approach. From the evidence of the opening week, it's going to be a tabloid news agenda, though delivered with a residual BBC reticence. Sunday morning's lead headline was "Paula Yates is flying to Australia to prepare for the funeral of her partner, the pop star Michael Hutchence". But the speculation about cause of death was buried far down the report.

Otherwise, the time is filled up with 30-minute "features".

"Quick! There isn't a cookery proramme on"

There's a book review show in which host Sir Robin Day wheezily disproves the view of his right-wing mates in the papers that the BBC retired him too soon. And there's a nightly 3.30am chat show called *Hard Talk*, hosted by Tim Sebastian, who turns out to be a Larry King without the braces, the charisma or the viewers.

Frequent trailers for the show promise guests of the calibre of P.W. Botha, Gerry Adams and Henry Kissinger. But when Square Eyes tuned in, Sebastian's guest was the Australian comic novelist Kathy Lette. Working on the basis that no one could possibly be watching, Lette was consistently filthy. When a pale Sebastian thanked her at the end, she addressed him as "spunk-rat".

Previous news networks (CNN, Sky News) have established their rhythm through snappy segments split by commercials. Another problem for News 24 is that it's got to advertise itself. These self-promos shamelessly rip-off a famous campaign for the *Grauniad*. A man is seen pulling a gun from his pocket but when the camera pulls back he is revealed to be the starter for a school sack race. The slogan is: "Get The Whole Picture".

Apart from the plagiarism, this is pretty rich given that most of the country aren't getting any picture at all. Perhaps a small note of caution should be entered here. CNN also began as a joke: so laughable were its early efforts that the networks nicknamed the service "Chicken Noodle News". Within a few years, CNN had become a slick and influential operation.

And yet the comparison is not a complete defence of News 24. The caveat is subject to caveats. 1) CNN did it first — not third as (after CNN and Sky News) the BBC is doing. 2) Even so, CNN has only proved truly in demand during the occasional war or juicy murder trial. These are less than an annual event. 3) CNN has a tiny audience and is still not profitable. Similarly, Sky News is now the only service Murdoch has to give away free.

So, News 24 may eventually gain some viewers but, given the experience of other all-day news providers, it is impossible to see how it will ever be anything other than a ruinous financial and personnel drain on the BBC's core programme-making.

Oh, and at 3.20am last Thursday morning, an anchorwoman accidentally said "discunt" while trying to say "discussions". Thank God nobody was watching.

'Square Eyes'

BBC NEWS 24 – LATE NEWS UPDATE COMING IN

DISMAYED by a series of technical disasters at the launch of News 24, executives at the BBC's "almost continuous" news service pinned their hopes on coverage of the Remembrance Sunday parade.

After all, the Beeb had covered the event for decades and, unlike News 24, the outside broadcast unit in Whitehall was using old-fashioned equipment that worked a treat. What could go wrong?

Er, following Birtist restructuring, outside broadcasts are controlled by BBC Events, not News. When News (run by Richard Clemmow) asked Events (run by Jana Bennet — aka Mrs Richard Clemmow) to supply News 24 with a feed of pictures, the request was refused... News 24 was not on the Events list and it would have to improvise.

Increasingly terse exchanges established that SKY and ITN *were* on the list and a quick glance at a TV screen confirmed that they were indeed running pictures. Happily a newsdesk hack managed to arrange for ITN's pictures to be patched back through to TV Centre, thus saving the new channel from making its debut without pictures of the day's biggest news story.

MEDIA NEWS

WHEN radio news reporters wrote to BBC house journal *Ariel* to say that they've all but stopped using the archive service because, thanks to John Birt's internal market, it's too expensive, the reply from one librarian reveals the depths of despair to which employees have sunk.

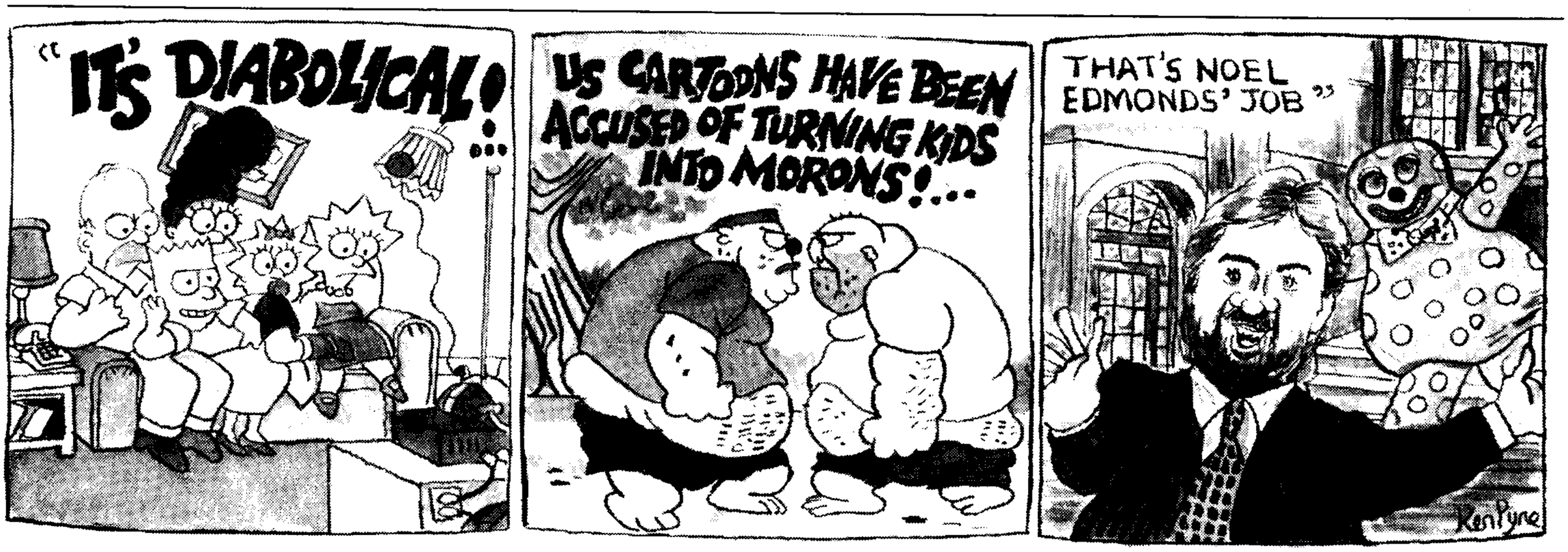
The "insane situation" in the libraries and archive department, it says, "is a national scandal". It points out that the new BBC Resources directorate (of which libraries and archives are part) is "soon to be a plc". The writer then says that one senior manager was overheard whispering drunkenly about share options.

What can it all mean?

THE current issue of *Around Resources* reveals how wisely BBC Resources' is spending licencepayers' money.

Development of the new BBC Resources paper bag is at last complete: "Unveiled this week — and featured on our cover — is the new look BBC Resources bag, writes Rita Hender, Marketing Communications Manager. Replacing the Post Production carrier which has served us well, this laminated paper bag with its striking design will soon become available to the whole of Resources."

The bag's "striking design" involves placing the word "Resources" after the BBC logo as part of "the first phase of the introduction of our new masterbrand identity". The bag itself is photographed next to a cappuccino to emphasise its freshness, daring and originality.



Plugged In

"SUZI Walker is a real sex-bomb — blonde, beautiful and curvy. But there was only one thing her footballer husband Ian had eyes for on their wedding night — the soccer on Sky TV."

SUE EVISON
The Sun

Submitted by Dr Simon A. Clark.

An occasional column devoted to cross-media plugs masquerading as news.

ITN chiefs are braced for the biggest change in their history. The appointment of former light entertainment producer David Liddiment as supremo of ITV looks certain to sound the death-knell — or the last bong — for *News at Ten***.**

Whenever the idea has been floated of moving ITN's main bulletin from 10pm, politicians have made such a fuss that ITV chiefs have retreated. But this time the mood is more determined, and a cunning plan has been devised. ITV will propose a news programme at 7pm — a slot that is likely to make MPs and ITN bosses apoplectic. Whereupon, in a spirit of "compromise", ITV will agree to a news at 8pm.

THE subject of *This Is Your Life* **on 1 December is none other than TV's own ageing swingometrist Peter Snow. Unfortunately for viewers, Michael Aspel's big red book tells a highly selective story. To quote the French poet Francois Villon,** *ou sont les neiges d'antan***?**

Where, for example, is Snow's first wife Alison (*née* Carter)? She left many Oxford suitors inconsolable when she married the craggily handsome Balliol man in 1964, and helped him climb from humble prep-school master to star newscaster. They had two fine offspring, one of whom, actress Shuna Snow, appears in the programme.

The conspicuous absence of the first Mrs Snow can perhaps be explained by the fact that the programme was masterminded by the second Mrs Snow, Anne Macmillan, a stringer for Canadian television. Peter Snow met her on a transatlantic assignment and divorced Alison soon afterwards.

Come to that, why are viewers not allowed to meet Snow's recently discovered "love child", now a suave Parisian banker? Also vetoed by Ms Macmillan, no doubt.

AMERICAN test audiences have been unable to decipher *The Boxer***, in which Daniel Day-Lewis plays a "lovable" IRA terrorist, so he and director Jim Sheridan were in Dublin last month hastily shooting extra scenes with on-screen love interest Emily Watson.**

Executives at Universal Pictures wanted more romance to dilute the politics in the film, which sees Day-Lewis playing "Danny Boy Flynn", who is jailed by the evil Brits for 14 years for no apparent reason (apart from the odd killing or 20). On his release — in 1991 — he becomes a boxer with the approval of the kindly IRA leadership, knocks out all his opponents and unites Catholics and Protestants in joy (and hatred of Brit oppressors presumably).

Ignoring the pathetic stereotyping of the sort that got *EastEnders* into trouble recently, the early 90s were among the most violent periods of the Troubles. But the film has had to be set in the past because the filmmakers don't know if there'll still be an IRA ceasefire when it's on general release next year.

Any explosions caused by the sort of people so sympathetically portrayed in the film will ruin any Oscar chances.

Maurice Hatton
1938-1997

Maurice Hatton took many editorial photographs for Private Eye in the early '60s before becoming a respected film and documentary maker.

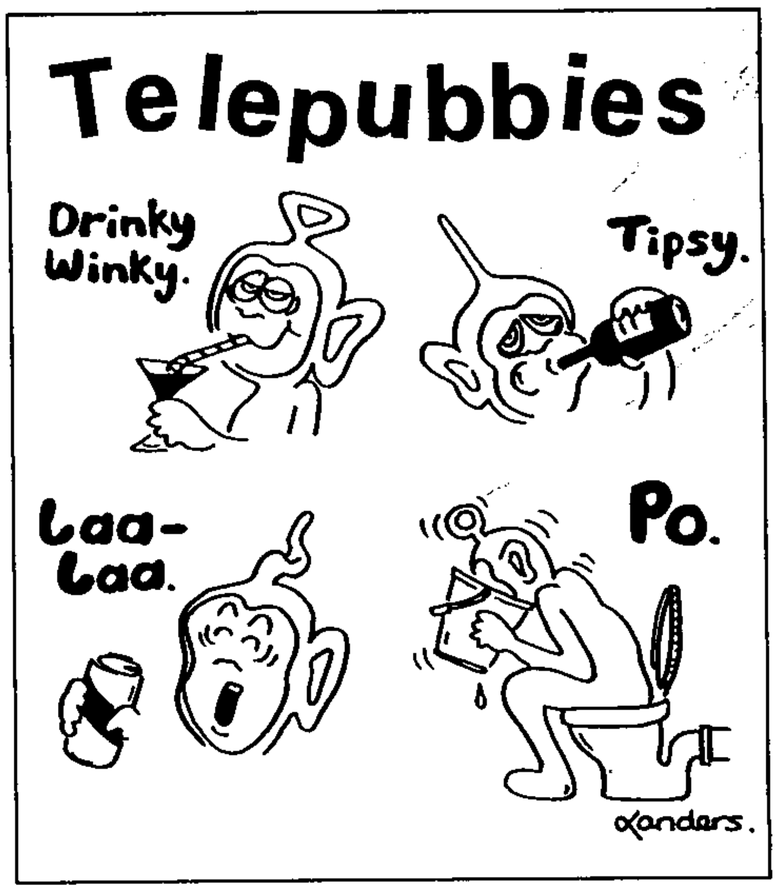
LESTER Piggott, former champion jockey and ex-jailbird, is desperate to scupper a forthcoming TV documentary in the *Secret Lives* **series which claims to examine his "dark side".**

Alas, the poor fellow has not had much luck — phoning friends in the racing world to warn them off, in several instances only hours after the film crew had departed. At Newmarket he was filmed secretly, anxiously asking an acquaintance: "What have they got on me? Women? Gambling?"

Outraged, Piggott finally pulled out all the stops and personally rang the head of BBC sport, Brian Barwick. The programme is made by Channel Four.

ON 15 November the *Times* **carried a long piece about the new video by the Prodigy, peppered with gratuitous plugs for ITV's** *Chart Show* **and several long quotes from Phil Davey, "series producer" for the programme.**

The story was written by Carol Lee and Des Burkinshaw. Could this be the same Des Burkinshaw who, when not working news shifts at the *Times*, doubles as coproducer of, er, *The Chart Show*?



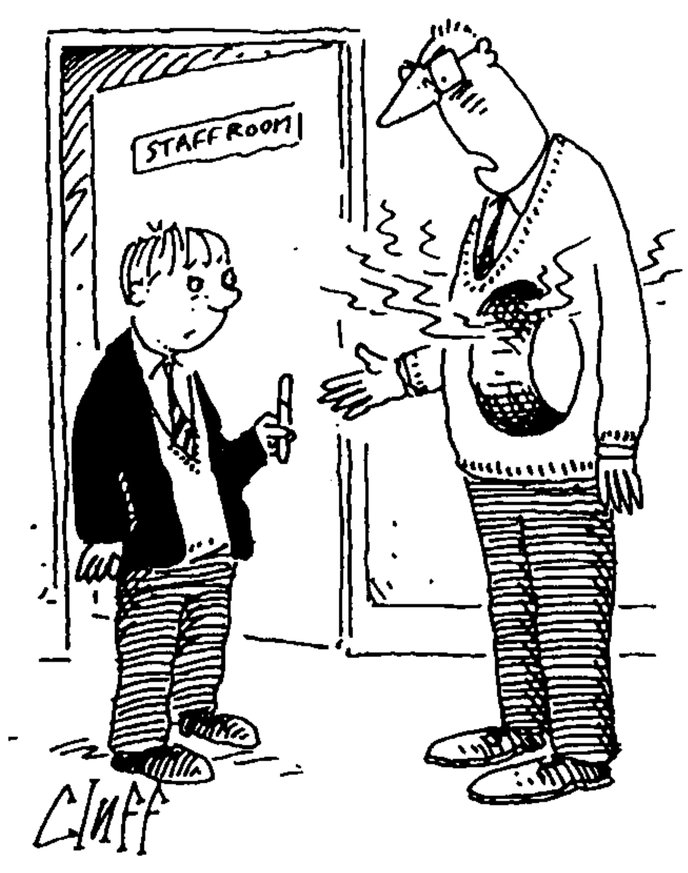
PISTE OFF

DAVE WATTS, editor of the *Daily Mail Ski* **magazine, claimed in a recent editorial that "nobody tests skis like we do". As a former editor of** *Which?***, Dave is something of an expert on product testing. However, the** *Daily Mail***'s approach to the subject seems a little different from that of Dave's last employer.**

The testing is conducted in the US by Jackson Hogen and also published via the internet on a website sponsored by a major ski maker. Before publication in the UK, the results are tweaked to fit the needs of the British market by the *Daily Mail Ski* team — including Dion Taylor, equipment director of Snow & Rock, a chain of ski shops.

The *Daily Mail* claims to review "only the very best that the market has to offer", eliminating those products which perform badly. But for some unexplained reason certain products which the Americans exclude from their reviews because of poor performance have mysteriously found their way into the *Mail*'s reviews of "recommended" equipment — notably skis and boots manufactured by Salomon and Rossignol.

There is of course no connection between the mysterious appearance of these products with glowing reviews and the heavy advertising support their importers give the *Daily Mail Ski* magazine. Similarly, any connection between the favourable reviews for these products and the large quantities purchased by the aforementioned Snow & Rock must be purely coincidental.



"That's it! I'm confiscating that laser pen, Spalding"

TOURISM NEWS

PITY the Egyptians, whose tourism minister and his colleagues from eight other countries in the Middle East Mediterranean Travel and Tourism Association were to have been awarded the World Peace Through Tourism Prize.

After the Luxor massacre the prize sponsors, Reed Travel Exhibitions, decided it would be best to cancel the award. The presentation was to have been made at the World Travel Market in London's Earls Court where the Egyptians have a grand stand in the style of an ancient monument. Unfortunately the stand also has a blow up photo of the Luxor massacre site across its front complete with large banner saying, er, "Welcome to Egypt".

DIANABALLS

"**DEATH AND DIANA.** Sociology & Social Psychology Conference. Saturday 15 November 1997. Coffee and video of funeral. 'Diana and the Media': Dr Jean Seaton, University of Westminster. 'Hierarchy and Rebounding Vitality, aspects of the death of the Princess': Dr Douglas Davies, University of Durham. Buffet lunch. 'Love and Power, the return of the oppressed': Professor Tony Walton, University of Reading. Workshops. Tea."

— Programme for conference at University of Sussex (submitted by Jim Cook and Sarah Hale).

"On Thursday 13 November at 7.30pm, a special event entitled Reading Diana will be held at Gamble Auditorium at Mt Holyoke College. An interdisciplinary panel will discuss the cultural meanings of the life and death of Diana, Princess of Wales and the myriad reactions to her funeral. The members of the panel and their discussion topics will include Alexandrina Deschamps, UMass (Women's Studies): 'Princess Di and the Cult of True Womanhood: Postscripts From a Rebellious Royal'; Liza Maurizio, UMass (Classics): 'A Voice of her Own? The Autobiography of Princess Diana'; Elisabeth Subrin, Amherst and Mt Holyoke College (Film/Video): 'Diana's Representation in the Press in Relation to Anorexia as a Language Disorder and Deviant Communication Strategy'; Philip Green, Smith College (Government): 'Diana as a Political Icon: Royalty, Democracy and Femininity'; Ambreen Hai, Smith College (English): 'Remembering Empire, Dis-Membering Diana: a Post-Colonial Reading of Diana as International Body'. Gail Hornstein, Mt Holyoke College (Psychology), will serve as moderator."

— From University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Daily Collegian *newspaper (submitted by Hussein Ibish).*

"Just two months after the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, a German university has made her the subject of an academic course. The series of 14 lectures will focus on the myth and meaning of her life and will be taught by the politics department at Berlin University... Students will take part in seminars such as 'Diana, a Latter-Day Virgin Mary', 'Emotion as a Political Weapon' and even 'Diana, Priestess of the Cult of Victimhood'."

— BBC Radio news item (submitted by Terry Hanstock).

DOING THE ROUNDS

Beyond Fundholding

IF THE leaks from the government's white paper on health are to be believed, the NHS will soon see the abolition of GP fundholding and the internal market, and their replacement by "local collectives" of GPs who will control more than 90 percent of the NHS's £34bn budget.

A local collective is thought to be a group of around 50 GPs representing 100,000 patients and holding the purse-strings for hospital, primary and community care.

This will leave slimmed-down health authorities with just 10 percent of the budget to buy super-specialist services, such as heart surgery, and switch their focus to public health programmes under the beady eye of Tessa "No Conflict of Interest" Jowell.

The abolition of fundholding will please those economists who have long argued that single practices budgeting for just 12,000 patients at a time was administratively cumbersome and expensive, with a distinct lack of accountability. Some fundholding practices made genuinely innovative changes to benefit patients, some made a quick buck, many just bumbled along and some got so in the red that they had to be bailed out by the health authority to the detriment of non-fundholding practices and patients.

Overall the audit commission found little proven value in the scheme, although doctors who made a killing on the generous prescribing, management and equipment budgets, and plugged their profits back into the premises they own to ensure a future capital gain, would doubtless disagree.

The BMA will salute the replacement of local competition with cooperation, but getting 50 GPs to cooperate on anything has been beyond any BMA meeting MD has ever been to. However, some GPs already operate in large group "multifunds" and are sensing yet more fabulous business opportunities from Labour's proposals.

Step forward the Newham Multifund, who in 1995 set the goal of moving "a quantifiable proportion of work from the secondary to the primary care setting". This target has now crystallised into "The Epsom Project" or, in English, "the purchase and operation of a Primary Care community hospital in Newham".

On first inspection, this looks like a great idea for patients. East London and City Health Authority is stuffed financially and, with no extra money promised by Labour, waiting lists are set to grow further with the attendant stress to patients, carers and the GP practices which have to support them. A community hospital on the patients' doorstep would be developed in three carefully planned stages.

So far so good, but who's going to staff this new hospital? "Detailed discussions have yet to take place with local consultants, whom it is hoped will offer their services." This seems a bit vague and will have ruffled a few feathers at Newham trust, which will be hoping to hold on to its consultants. However, the proposal stresses the trendy cooperative approach. "It's the right time for all parties to get together and make sure these plans work for the benefit of all — most of all, our patients." Mmm.

The rat really begins to smell when we get to the vexed question of whether the Epsom project will be an NHS hospital. "The clinic will be owned by a consortium of individual GPs from Newham, who will form a company to do this. It will be a privately owned clinic, but it will provide NHS services to patients." So, a consortium of budget-holding NHS GPs will buy a private hospital, employ all the staff and refer their NHS patients to it. The doctors reassure us that "any surpluses (of NHS money) will be ploughed back into providing more services"

Even today some of our top hospitals still use leeches

without mentioning that this would also increase the capital worth of the hospital they own.

The practice of purchasing and providing for your own patients is not a new one for GPs — some do it with their own physiotherapy services, or send patients to their own nursing homes — but never before has it been proposed on such a grand scale. The success of such a project requires strict quality control and relies on the integrity of the doctors, but the potential for mismanagement or fraud is obvious.

The proposers are very open and happy to answer questions (Dr Zuhair Zarifa, 0171-476 2255; Ashwin Shah, 0181-534 4133; and Mrs Linda Hughes 0181-552 2632), but if they succeed, the privatisation of the NHS that was "creeping" under the Tories will be galloping out of sight under Labour.

M.D.

DOWN ON THE FARM

CAMPAIGNERS trying to force the government to recognise how dangerous are the nerve gas-based chemicals in organophosphorous (OP) pesticides have been buoyed by the partial victory of farm worker John Hill, who sued his employer over longterm illness caused by OP pesticides.

The next case which campaigners hope will take the issue forward is that of Gary Coomber, a 35-year-old sheep farmer from Kent. Mr Coomber used OP sheep-dip on his farm and suffered a near-fatal heart attack in 1992, from which he never fully recovered.

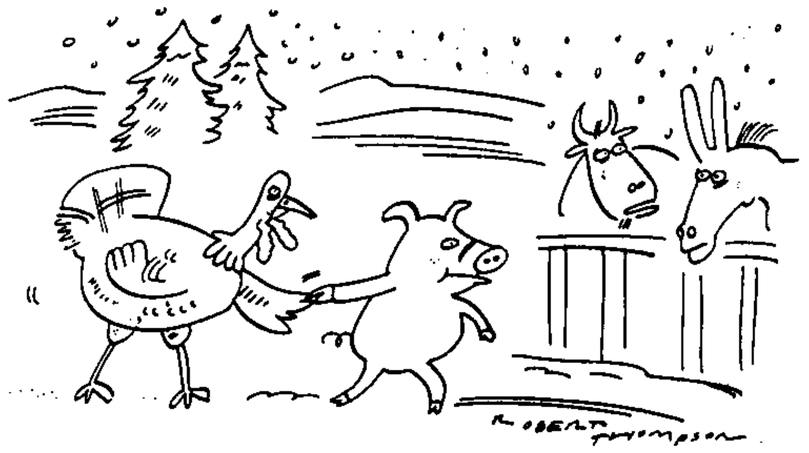
Like many OP victims before him, including Mr Hill, he turned for help to the pioneering legal partnership of Leigh Day & Co, the champion of "lost" causes, relying on the firm to prepare a case for damages which, it was hoped, might reach the high court early next year.

But, after a successful award of legal aid, Mr Coomber has been troubled by a series of delays in his case, and of instances of experts hired by his law firm not yet having been paid. When he then learned that Mr Hill had switched his case to an alternative firm, Dawbarns, Coomber decided it was time to move too, and he went to Dawbarns, too.

Only then did he discover that, although his case was nowhere near court-ready, the current legal aid limit of £100,000 had already been spent by Leigh Day, and nothing was left in the kitty for the new firm to progress the case, until the limit is increased. Meanwhile Leigh Day is seeking another £48,000 from the legal aid board which it says is justified by the "difficulties and complexities" of the case.

Martyn Day, who lives in a £300,000 house in Lewisham, south London, once told the *Sunday Times*: "I always felt it is a credit to our system that individuals are able to take on the big companies." This is the same Martyn Day whose firm in 1994-5 collected £8.3m in fees from the legal aid board for cases, many of which were less than successful. This was three times more than was paid to any other firm, and Leigh Day has since prospered from legal aid certificates obtained on behalf of many OP victims seeking justice.

'New Muckspreader'



"Mark my words, it won't last"

SIGNAL FAILURES

Tale of Two City Routes

PARTS of the privatised rail regime appear to have been poisoned by British Rail's former determination to exterminate two of England's potentially more useful rail routes.

In the south passengers are exasperated with the Connex SouthCentral service from Uckfield, Sussex, to London. Two years ago an internal BR memo was leaked to the *Eye* (884) which stated that the line was to be starved of investment and then closed, and closure is still not entirely off the cards.

The line was originally an alternative route from Brighton and Lewes to London, but BR's butchering turned it into a dead-end line on which so many corners had been cut that the fatal accident at Cowden in 1994 was inevitable.

Commuters were hoping Connex would not harbour the same death-wish as BR, but a log of arrivals sent to the *Eye* shows that the main morning commuter train to London arrived late at Victoria on almost every weekday between 6 October and 10 November. The train should arrive at 8.48, so the delays leave commuters who should start work at 9am with a lot of explaining to do.

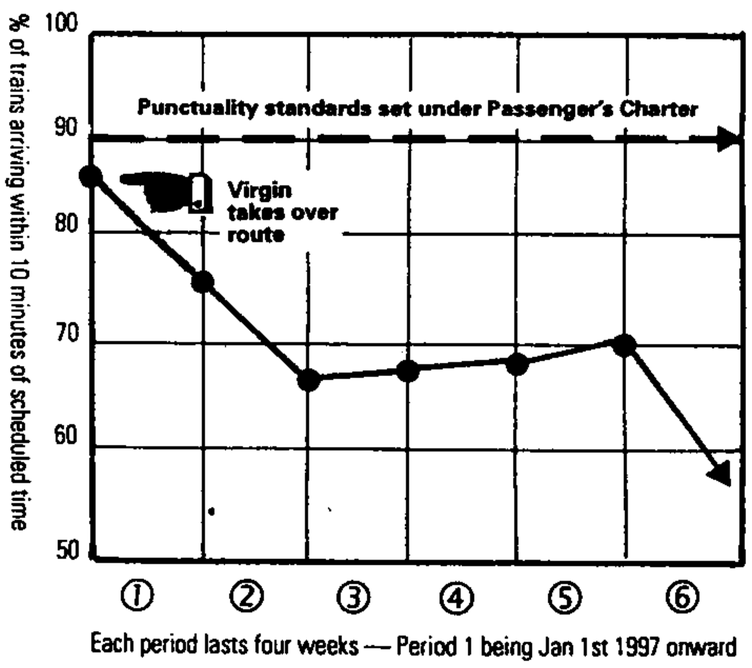
Abysmal punctuality is compounded by the miserable state of the trains, some of the oldest in Britain. They have only one toilet (not accessible to two-thirds of the passengers because there are no connections between carriages), and such is the railway managers' low opinion of the line that replacement trains have still not been ordered.

● At the other end of the country, meanwhile, BR's failed attempt in 1983 to close the Settle to Carlisle route through the Yorkshire Dales involved scrapping the popular Thomas-Clyde Express, closing most of the stations and diverting all freight trains to other lines. Although two of those three withdrawals have since been reinstated, the route's intended primary function — as a long-distance express link — is still being ignored. Trains stop at all stations as they shuttle between Leeds and Carlisle, none providing a fast through service from Strathclyde to South Yorkshire and the East Midlands.

In fact trains ran faster over the Settle to Carlisle line in 1938. Regional Railways North East, which runs today's services, makes no attempt to connect with Virgin Trains at Carlisle, and most Glasgow to Leeds passengers end up travelling via Edinburgh — 72 miles further round. In fact they go the long way round thanks to National Rail Enquiries, which tells them to take the Edinburgh route and change at York, even at times of day when the Carlisle route offers an identical journey time. The return fare via Carlisle is a third cheaper — and nearly half the price on Fridays — but this information has to be prised out of clerks.

'Dr B. Ching'

Punctuality chart for Virgin's Scottish Service



Each period lasts four weeks — Period 1 being Jan 1st 1997 onward

Rotten Boroughs

Islington

TRADERS from Islington's Chapel Street market were so worried by the rising cost of council services — and that the council's markets account had gone £250,000 in the red after years of profitability — they hired ex-Scotland Yard private detectives to follow council binmen and market inspectors and film them.

The results were revealing. The inspectors spent much of the day shopping at the Trocadero in Piccadilly Circus — when they weren't going to the dogs, sitting in cafes on the Caledonian Road or sleeping in cars.

The binmen, who were collecting huge fees for shifting market rubbish, were also busy. On good days rubbish was picked up and sold to waste dealers. On bad days it wasn't picked up and the binmen went moonlighting for local businesses and restaurants.

In the council chamber, meanwhile, councillors debated the Nolan report on standards in public life. The Lib Dem Dave Barnes set such high standards he was thrown out for repeatedly telling mayor Rupert Perry to "fuck off", calling chief executive Leisha Fullick a "lackey" and hurling coins at Labour members, narrowly missing a pregnant councillor.

Cock-ups Corner

IN Paisley, Armistice Day was to be observed by two minutes' silence at Renfrewshire council, the start and finish to be sounded by short bursts of the fire alarm.

Unfortunately only workers in the property section on the top floor knew this. So the alarms rang for the whole two minutes and the "silence" was marked by 500 people evacuating the building.

Meanwhile in **Leeds** the Labour council has been trying for more than a year to recruit an education director at £72,000pa. Tories say no one will take the job because of the council's reputation for political interference in the work of professionals. Now the Labour group is bringing in head-hunters at a cost of £40,000.

In North Lanarkshire Labour councillors who put council tax through the roof and raised admission prices to sports facilities by more than 100 percent pleaded that they "had to make ends meet". Eventually they said the needy could pay half-price — before extending the same discount to themselves and officials.

Coventry

WHISTLEBLOWER Wayne Samuel, who exposed fraud at Coventry city council's contract services department, has had to leave his job as a council gardener saying he was victimised after his colleagues "literally sent me to Coventry".

Richmond

THE row over Sainsbury's £1m donation to Labour and allegations that the government allowed through a new superstore in Richmond obscure a more interesting story: for once Labour isn't at fault but the Lib Dems who run Richmond council.

They claim that they vehemently oppose the new store on the old gasworks site, but when their big moment came at the inquiry last year they blew their own case. One of the best arguments against it came under Point No 4 — Alternative Land Uses. The ideal alternative use for the works would have been to house a new ice rink, the Lib Dems having sold the site of Richmond's famous old rink for new homes at a knockdown price. Yet at the inquiry the Liberals withdrew Point 4. No reason was given.

Residents can look forward to being sold down the Thames over the Old Deer Park, an English Heritage-listed parkscape and conservation area which is threatened by another supermarket and a rugby stadium.

Hull

INSPECTOR Knacker is examining the £42,000 expenses claimed by Hull housing chairman John Black during his year as mayor.

Initially Black was supported by council chief executive Ian Crookham. But now police are involved and Black has been suspended from Hull Labour party by the national executive committee, Crookham is back-pedalling.

The *Eye*'s revelations about Black also led to the suspension of Hull Labour Party — although not without a struggle. When Independent Labour councillor Chris Jarvis drew up a council motion calling for Black's suspension, Labour members were whipped into rejecting it on pain of being thrown out of the party. The supposedly politically neutral town clerk Peter Barker also tried to convince Jarvis to withdraw his motion.

In the event Jarvis lost his motion, and he also failed to win support among former Labour colleagues for an inquiry into the activities of Cllr Colin Inglis, deputy social services chairman, who was later named in council under privilege for helping Knacker with his inquiries into child sex allegations. When the ruling Labour group used council rules to block a motion calling for Inglis's suspension, the party's Walworth Road HQ decided it was time to close Hull down.

Lambeth

FINANCIAL crisis looms in Lambeth where some councillors talk openly about the possibility of the council going bankrupt.

District auditor Derek Elliott says pisspoor administration of housing benefit means the council must refund the department of social security £25m for payments it cannot substantiate. Normally councils can show when and to whom HB was paid. But not Lambeth with its incomplete or missing records.

Senior managers are also rapped for allowing a £25m overspend on the year's budget. The appointment of chief executive Heather Rabbatts to lead an inquiry into the overspend by senior managers raises eyebrows: she's been in charge of a "radical overhaul" of said senior management.

Pseuds Corner

On January 5, 1973, at a beach near Los Angeles International Airport, Chris Burden fired several shots from a pistol at a Boeing 747. This performance or event survives only in a laconic description and a photograph of a young man shooting heavenwards.

When I first heard about this piece, I laughed out loud at such a piece of extreme deliquency (sic) in the name of art. On further reflection, I realised how eloquent Burden was in articulating complex ethical and political issues in this audacious action.

The possibility of flight takes us back to the realm of the mythic and there, in this piece of frailty and human folly, is the fall of Icarus. Nowadays, we place our trust in technology as the motor force and our faith in liberal consensual humanism to keep us up in the air.

Burden's futile and reckless act of art terrorism foregrounds the possibilities and limits of the individual's power within society.

GILLIAN WEARING
The Guardian

PEILE Colin, McCOUAT Mal
The rise of relativism: the future of theory and knowledge development in social work. British Journal of Social Work, 27(3), June 1997, pp.343-360.

This article explores a range of paradigms evident in recent debates about social work theory and epistemology, including the positivist, post-positivist, interpretist, critical, ecological, feminist, poststructural and creative positions. While applauding the openness generated by these competing approaches, concerns are raised about the emergence of a meta-paradigm of relativism. After identifying the evidence of this move towards relativism in various paradigms, the potential limitations of this trend for social work are explored.

Caredata Abstracts, published by National Institute for Social Work

And when I say bloody, I mean it. De Frutos has danced naked for several years; here he not only gets Wharton to dance naked too (for the first time), but smears their legs and anuses in blood. These stylised couplings show a man trying to bludgeon his way into another's soul, killing him in the process. The pity of it is overwhelming.

ISMENE BROWN
Daily Telegraph

As part of our commitment to bringing the very best in friendly, efficient standards of service, we have introduced a unique new Customer Service Programme — The Rainbow Initiative. Specially selected members of staff, identified by their distinctive rainbow coloured waistcoats, are on hand to offer customers extra help at busy times. The seven colours of the rainbow stand for important service values.

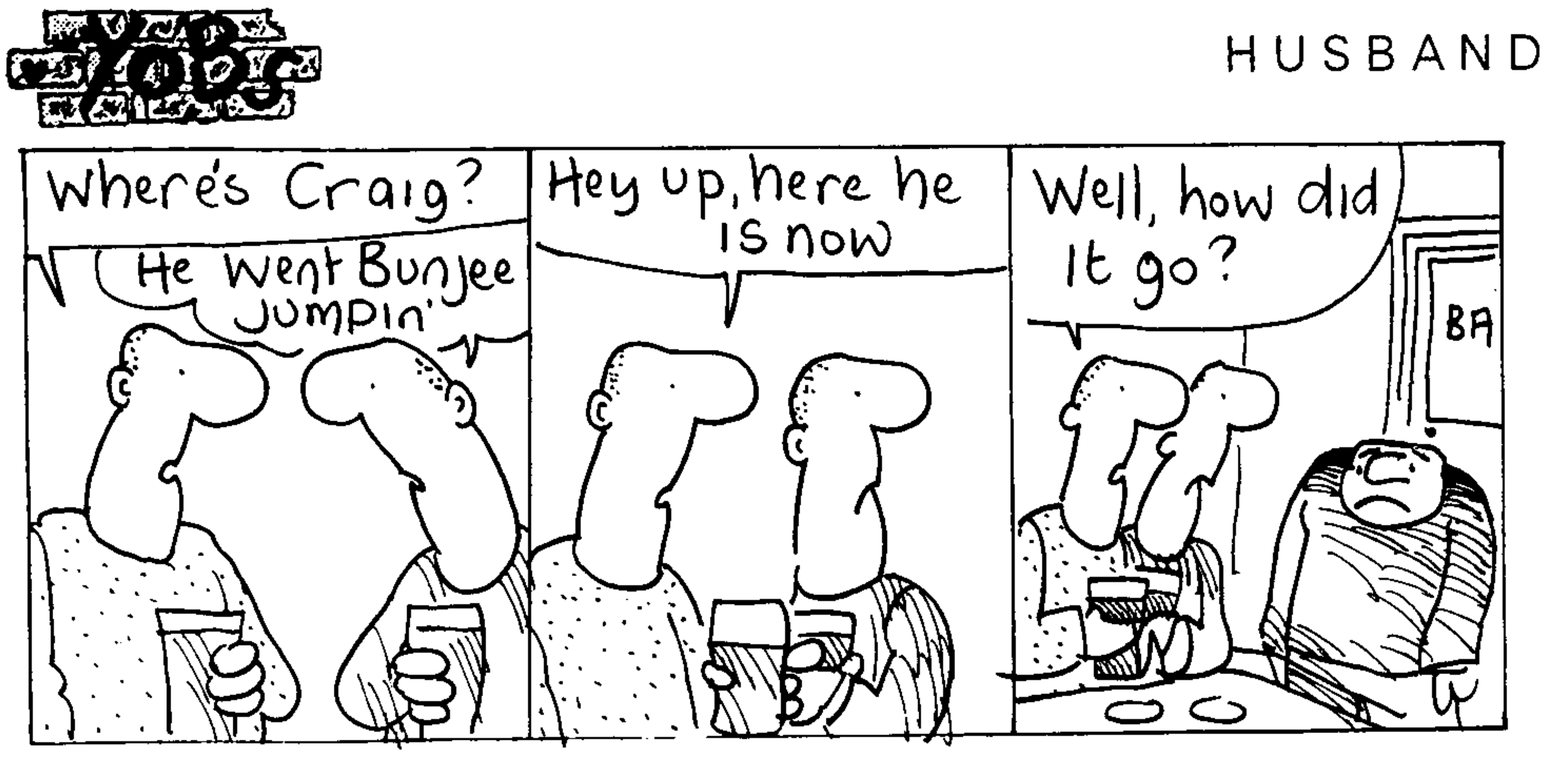
Red Working together as a team
Orange Being professional
Yellow Making guests welcome
Green Building customer relationships
Blue Ensuring guests feel positive
Indigo Helping guests with problems
Violet Ensuring guests' peace of mind

Put together, these values will make your stay at a Moat House Hotel an enjoyable one!

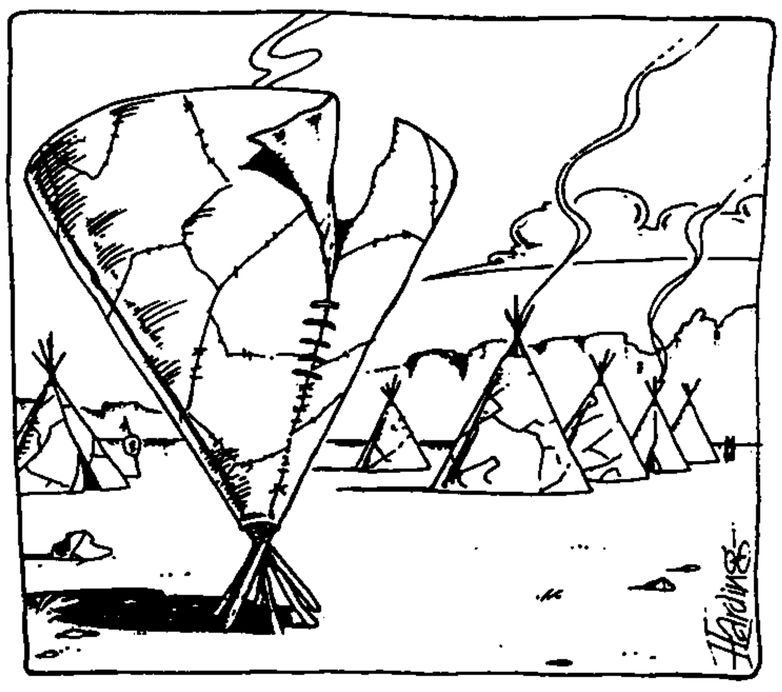
Moat House Hotels News & Views

CONTRIBUTORS: Everyone, P. Johnson, Roger Sinden, Peter Hughes, Griff Round.

£10 paid for entries.



Red Indian Architect



IN THE LIBRARY

ISLINGTON council celebrated National Libraries Week in its own inimitable fashion... by closing a library.

When Chris Smith, the MP for Islington South and Finsbury, heard that St Luke's library was being shut to save £110,000, he was not the happiest of culture secretaries.

Meanwhile organisers of London's Living Library, an event to launch National Libraries Week, printed 13,000 programmes at great expense listing public events on launch day. The main event was to have been a public debate chaired by ex-MP and football bore David Mellor. But the day before Mellor phoned to say he couldn't participate: he was going to watch his son play soccer. Elsewhere, librarians in Bristol are watching the slow destruction of the Arts library, one of the largest archives outside London. Bristol council has resolved to abolish the acquisition budget, disperse the books within the Central Library building and, via savage financial restrictions, sack all but one of the art librarians. The council's pledge not to close the collection has been kept in name only.

FERRY PROFITABLE

SLOVAKIAN refugees continue to arrive at Dover by car and coach load, causing a severe headache for the government.

The home office now says the best way to prevent the influx is to ensure that the Slovakians don't cross the Channel in the first place, and it suggests that responsibility for repatriation if refugee status is not proven (in three out of four cases it isn't) should belong to the ferry company.

When P&O, the largest operator in Dover, heard this it got on to its trade federation who declared that in no way could P&O be responsible for the passengers they carried; that the Slovakian passengers had valid passports and tickets; and that it would cost £500,000 to repatriate them.

Er, £500,000? So far only about 2,000 refugees have arrived which means P&O intends to charge £250 per Slovakian they return across the Channel. This is the equivalent of the fare P&O charges all-in for a car load of people at peak periods.

At the moment the ferry company is running its cheap winter timetable which includes day trips for £1. Slovakian repatriation could prove a nice little earner.

NOOKS and CORNERS

VISITORS to the famous church of SS Mary and Nicholas at Wilton admiring the fine monuments carved by such sculptors as Westmacott, Rossi and Birnie Philip, will find the bust of the 9th Earl of Pembroke carved by Louis Francois Roubiliac missing.

The plinth with its epitaph is still present, but not the marble bust by the celebrated French-born sculptor. Under restoration, perhaps? No. It is now in the London showroom of Messrs Christies and is to be included in the sale of "Important European Sculpture and Works of Art" on 2 December. Why? Well, money is needed to restore the church.

But a monument to one of the earls of Pembroke — whose seat, Wilton House, is nearby — is surely a fixture and one of the reasons the church is worth repairing in the first place? After all, the monument was originally placed in the old medieval church in 1750, and when this was expensively replaced in 1845 it was carefully repositioned in the new church (although the original background panel was lost).

So this does seem rather a drastic step, and surely the present Lord Pembroke cannot approve of his vicar flogging off a bust of one of his ancestors? Er... actually it is the present earl, the fashionable velvet-jacketed socialite and maker of soft-porn movies (who is not short of a bob or two), who is behind the sale. Has he no sense of history or family heritage? Evidently not.

This is not the first time attempts have been made to raise money by selling works of sculpture in churches. But when it was proposed to sell a monument by Nollekens in the private chapel at Corby Castle, the Georgian Group objected and the sale was called off. Funerary monuments are works of art, integral to the architecture, and are one of the glories of English churches. If, in this case, the sale goes ahead, a barbarous and disastrous precedent will be set and no monument will be safe.

The parish church council at Wilton and Lord Pembroke — as well as the Salisbury diocesan advisory committee who presumably granted a faculty for this vandalism — should all be ashamed of themselves. The Roubiliac bust should be withdrawn from the sale and returned where it belongs.

BETWEEN St Mary's, the glorious parish church of Melton Mowbray, and Melton railway station is a four-acre derelict site ripe, as they say, for commercial development. Messrs Leehampton, developers, would like to build an Aldi discount store there. But a coalition of Liberal Democrat and Labour councillors consider, not unreasonably, that the shed-like structures are not worthy of the home of the pork pie.

This decision has infuriated the Rev Charles Jenkin, rector of St Mary's, who knows what is best for his flock. "The buildings are not sheds at all," he insists, "but high quality retail architecture... Things have come to a pretty poor pass when it takes the local rector to tell people to be commercially realistic."

Things certainly have come to a pretty poor pass when an Anglican priest publicly advocates the building of a cheap supermarket right next to what Pevsner described as "the stateliest and most impressive of all churches in Leicestershire". So why is he doing this? Perhaps because St Mary's is "hampered by poor parking and access", and so a supermarket car park next door would be a boon. Also Mr Jenkin "would like to see a new church youth club hall on the site" and this might be arranged as "planning gain" if the Aldi shed ever got planning permission. Clearly this dynamic clergyman has the right priorities — bishop material, I should say.

THE new chairman of the strife-torn Prince of Wales Institute is Lady Browne-Wilkinson. Who she?

Well she is, um, a distinguished lawyer, even if she doesn't know much about architecture. Her appointment was arranged by Mark Boland, the prince's new private secretary, who has also tried to kill off the magazine *Perspectives* which is subsidised by the institute.

Why? I imagine because it is independent minded. Mr Boland, you see, is a friend of Peter Mandelson's, and we don't want to read any criticism of Tony Blair's Albert Speer, My Lord Rogers of Riverside, the greatest architect in the world, do we? Mustn't rock the nice comfortable "new" Labour cultural boat, or suggest that the Greenwich dome isn't the most exciting building in the world.

'Piloti'

IN THE COURTS

PATRICK HARRINGTON QC drew sighs of compassion from Cardiff crown court when he described the fate of his client, a young woman who was found guilty of child cruelty after her daughter died of alcohol poisoning.

"She will no doubt view the rest of her life through a window of tears. It is a great tragedy," he said.

Could Harrington be any relation of the fictitious manic-depressive barrister Billy Wickstead-Hacking, created by Judge James Pickles? In Pickles's 1993 book *Off the Record* he writes: "Every client of his, whatever the charge, sat in the dock and heard his counsel Mr Wickstead-Hacking say that he was looking at life through *a window of tears*". How strange!

O·B·N

Cherie Blair is the embodiment of modern woman. She's smart, funny and successful. She has earned the right not to have to bow and scrape to people whose position is determined by an accident of birth.

And apart from that — she looks lovely in trousers.

CAROLE MALONE
Sunday Mirror

Contributor: M. Greenall

£10 paid for all entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

"Oddly enough, I'm here to make a living for myself"

Letters

Guilt-edged

Sir,

Whilst normally a strong supporter of the sympathies expressed in your magazine, I feel I should write and say that when it comes to the Louise Woodward case you have by and large misplaced the emphasis of your coverage.

I do not deny for a moment that you are right to be cynical about the motives of the press coverage in this case. Most of the popular press has adopted the pose that Louise Woodward is "one of ours", and therefore could not possibly be guilty regardless of what the evidence might be. This is of course typically crass and only what we have come to expect from our dismal printed news media.

That said, I do feel on the basis of having read as much as possible of the evidence involved in the case that there was at least reasonable doubt of the nanny's involvement in Matthew Eappen's death. A great deal of medical evidence was presented to suggest that the baby died primarily as a result of an old injury and not of the direct actions of Miss Woodward on the night of his death.

The prosecution evidence seemed generally less well qualified and more dependent on attempting to build up an atmosphere of animosity towards Miss Woodward based on her personality. It is also certain to me that a mis-trial would have been declared in this country once the victim's parents had appeared on television during the jury's deliberations.

PRIVATE EYE seems to be very smugly dismissing the views of people who had merely read a bit about the case in the papers. I have read a considerable amount in the papers and feel that I am making a similar judgement to the one I am asked to make by the EYE when details of probable miscarriages of justice are printed within your pages.

Yours sincerely,
MR T. MATTHEWS,

Sir,

Watching xenophobe Brits bash the Louise Woodward jury for allegedly getting it wrong, I couldn't help thinking of the long series of cases in which British juries have come to palpably wrong verdicts — with far worse, even terminal, consequences for the defendants. Of course those juries were often bamboozled by bent evidence, so they may have been as blameless as the Bostonians. Would judges alone do any better?

As I am now writing a book on the jury system under both English and Scottish law, I would like to hear from any EYE readers whose experience of sitting on juries in crown courts, libel actions, civil damages or inquests has given them strong views on the juror's role in British justice.

No breach of jury law is involved!
Phone: 0171 435 7351, Fax: 0171 794 6575.

Thanks.
MARTIN SHORT,

London NW3.

Sir,

The death of Princess Diana triggered off a wave of national hysteria and now we see it all again with the Louise Woodward case. As a reasonably well-informed person I cannot help feeling that I am missing something. From a relatively disinterested point of view my opinion is that the court in Boston did not prove her guilt. Equally, it did not prove her innocence. Louise Woodward is free and alive, unlike Matthew Eappen, and the images of her jubilant supporters are simply not justified. The objective stance taken by PRIVATE EYE represents a life-raft for those of us who refuse to be swept along by the media-driven tide of events.

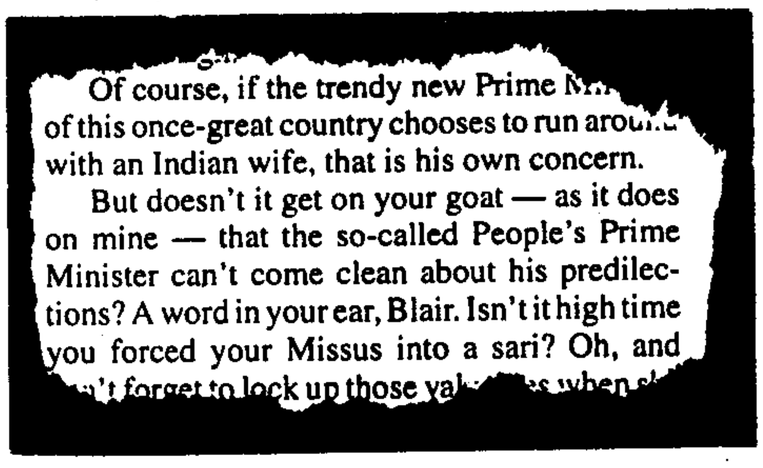
Yours wearily,
MARIE HOWLAND,

Ardglass, Co. Down.

Sari state

Sir,

Yet another well kept secret let slip in your last issue (937).



Of course, if the trendy new Prime M... of this once-great country chooses to run arou... with an Indian wife, that is his own concern.

But doesn't it get on your goat — as it does on mine — that the so-called People's Prime Minister can't come clean about his predilections? A word in your ear, Blair. Isn't it high time you forced your Missus into a sari? Oh, and ...'t forget to lock up those ya... ...s when s...

Norman Tebbit in his diary exhorts the wife of the PM to don a sari. Imagine my surprise upon seeing the photograph on the front page of the DAILY TELEGRAPH three days later showing Cherie (or should that be Shiree?) wearing exactly this costume.

Yours faithfully,
PETER KENT,

London W12.

Lookalike

Ronnie

Cherie

Sir,

I wonder whether any of your readers have noticed the extraordinary resemblance between Ronnie Wood who plays with new Britpop sensation The Rolling Stones, and Cherie Blair who plays with new Britpop sensation Tony Blair.

Yours Marianne faithfully,
PAUL DOMENET,

Plaistow, W. Sussex.

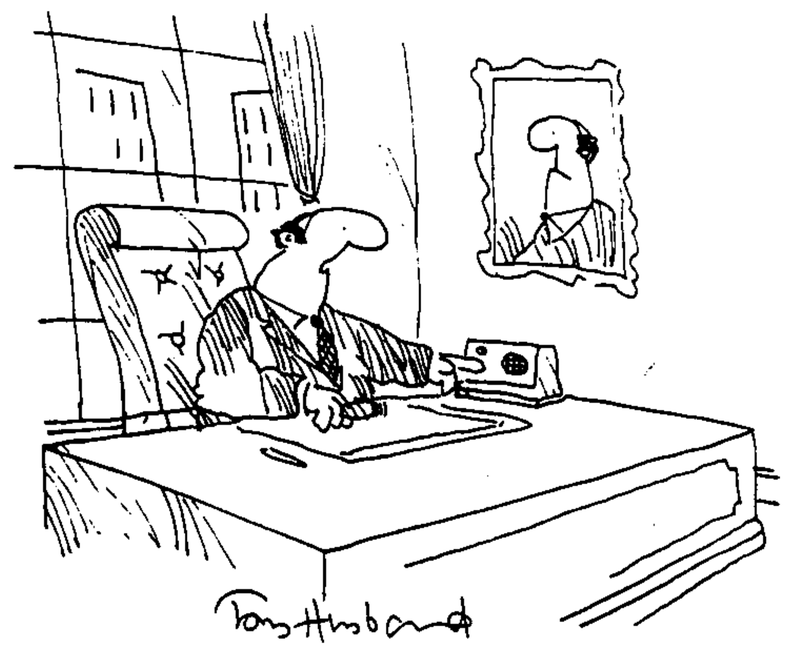
"You can always tell when Christmas is getting close!"

Putting the boot in

Sir,

The story in your edition of 14 November about John Birt and the boots in the Archer's exhibition at BBC Experience is utter fiction. He didn't handle or speak about the boots, or do anything similar. If you had sources for the story, they lied to you. I should know I was there.

MIKE McDONALD,
General Manager, BBC Experience.



"Miss Perkins — what date is Christmas this year?"

Risky business

Sir,

Dr B. Ching is quite right to castigate the appalling behaviour of the train leasing companies, basically one of bleed the assets dry and then run. But I am sorry to see him writing of old carriages "long since identified as a safety risk".

Nothing is perfectly safe, so what is a safety risk? Even the most "unsafe" train is a great deal more safe than a car, and sitting in it is a great deal safer thing to do than cross the road or ride a bike. The truth is that these supposedly unsafe trains are, by most standards, extremely safe and the level of safety would be regarded in most circumstances as well above the minimum required.

Yours sincerely,
CHRIS PADLEY,

Market Rasen, Lincolnshire.

Sooner or later?

Sir,

Michael Oakley (EYE 937) observes that many trains are ten minutes early arriving in London. I am sceptical. I have noticed on several occasions that the London to Leeds train is on time at Wakefield, but ten minutes early arriving at Leeds, which is only a few miles further on. Can it be that the timetables allow ten minutes "slack" so that a train which is ten minutes late can actually be claimed to be on time? I think we should be told.

Yours sincerely,
DAVID GIBSON,

Leeds.

Lying low-down

Sir,

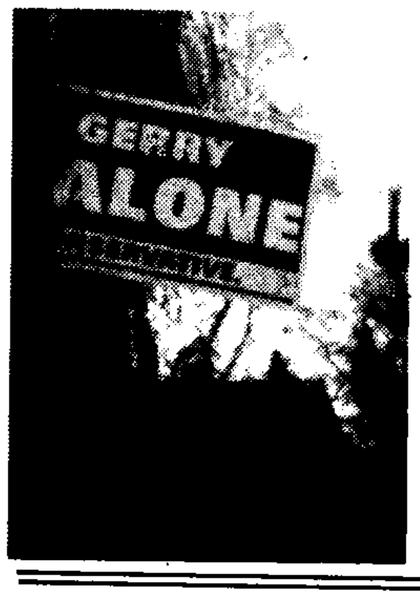
The dangers of passive smirking (EYE 936, page 21) were illustrated by the recent Virgin campaign to sign up insurance suckers. The idea was to persuade victims who had already unnecessarily taken out so-called mortgage protection policies to switch to Virgin, thereby becoming victims all over again. The Branson blurb said: "You know you have to take out life cover to pay off your mortgage should you die. Everyone does." (See, for example, the TIMES, 9 October, page 7.)

This is a blatant lie, reminiscent of all those other lies that have put millions into the pockets of loan sharks by inducing mortgage borrowers to take out unnecessary endowment policies. So I laid it before our smart new protector, the Personal Investment Authority (PIA). They admitted my point was a valid one, but rejected it on the ground that "the advertisement is written in a colloquial style that is more conversational than educational".

So that's all right then. Keep your finance lies conversational and the PIA will nod and smile. We all like conversation.

Yours faithfully,
FRANCIS BENNION,

Kennington, Oxford.



I-SPY

Winchester

Submitted by Giles Barrett. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

Heartfelt thanks

Sir,

I am concerned at the "cause celebre" that has developed in respect to the standards of certain Bristol surgeons in the undertaking of high risk cardiac operations at the United Bristol Hospital Trust resulting, sadly, in the unfortunate deaths of some children when the surgery was not a success.

I cannot see, however, that it is possible to lay down a law of averages to estimate a success/failure ratio in such complicated surgery. Surely, in all circumstances, the overall conditions are too diverse.

Mr James Wishart, the senior surgeon in charge, who seems to have been the most pilloried, is one of the finest cardiac surgeons in the country (and I think you are generous enough to recognise this — Eye 937). Mr Wishart gave me major "open heart" surgery when I was rising 80. He was perfectly candid about the risks involved. Fortunately all went well but had things gone otherwise my dependants would not have gone whining to the GMC about it.

Yours faithfully,
I.T. HUNTER,

Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol.

LUVVIES

"I picked it [the script for *Bodyguard II*] up and the first 30 pages were totally her. It was dignified, sexy, smart, funny. And I couldn't finish. I stopped. It broke my heart."

KEVIN COSTNER (on his proposed co-starring role with Princess Diana)
Premiere Magazine

Submitted by Tom Sandars.

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

Subject to review

Sir,

Your Bookworm has made a number of assumptions about me from my review of THE END OF ALICE *which I would like to correct. Firstly, the books editor of the* INDEPENDENT *did not ask me to review A.M. Homes' novel. I approached him on the subject.*

Nowhere in the review do I use the word "art"; nor do I "ecstatically commend... splayed limbs and bodily fluids". Instead I refer to "abominable crimes" and "utter agony". I do not find violence, fictional or otherwise, to be exciting or erotic.

Nor do I indiscriminately defend any and all transgressive writings. I endorsed AMERICAN PSYCHO, *a novel in which all the killings are delusions, but have frequently declined the opportunity to comment on far more sensational books — David Britton's* LORD HORROR, *for example, or Peter Sotos'* TOOL *— novels so indefensible that they did not merit any discussion.*

I have no difficulty in differentiating between good and evil or between fact and fantasy. Having experienced sexual abuse and other set-backs in childhood I am extremely aware of the vast gap between real life and fiction. My attitude towards convicted murderers and molesters is not liberal.

Books themselves have not caused me pain but helped me to understand it. Thus I will continue to oppose any censorship of the imagination. Certainly I am drawn to the gothic but this is surely a matter for my NHS psychiatrist, not some ignorant amateur who feels entitled to castigate me as morally incontinent on the basis of a piece that was concerned solely with textual analysis.

Yours sincerely,
ELIZABETH YOUNG,

London W10.

A closed book

Sir,

Re: Bookworm's deeply appropriate comments on THE END OF ALICE. *I was recently invited by the dear old Beeb to debate related matters on the radio with the author. She averred that the reason for writing the book was "to bring sexual abuse of children into the public domain", which begged the question, which incidentally she didn't answer, where has she been for the last 10-15 years, during which time we have discussed the topic ad nauseam, to the point where the general public is now thoroughly sick of it and switches off whenever it is raised.*

I congratulated her and her present editor, my former editor, John Saddler esq, on the amount of publicity her tome had collected by virtue of being revolting and told her that her readership would consist entirely of paedophiles. Her reply was "Paedophiles are not book readers".

This will come as a shock to those who have battled over the years to warn the public that paedophiles come from every strata of society and all intelligence levels. Paedophiles don't read books, they are all thick illiterates apparently, so that narrows the field down nicely.

Can it possibly be that the eminent academic's avowed intensive research into paedophilia is nothing more than an attempt to hoodwink us into believing that her book is a work of some intellectual merit, rather than a cynical way to make money out of material considered unpalatable by even the sleaziest of hacks? I think we should be told.

Yours sincerely,
MEG HENDERSON,

Dunfermline, Scotland.

HOM SAP

BY DAVID AUSTIN

RUSHTON REMEMBERED

A Wake for Willie

on Sunday December 7th at 7pm

THE MAYFAIR THEATRE

Stratton Street, W1

A unique evening of wit and humour to raise funds for the Lady Taverners (to buy a minibus for disabled children), hosted by Ned Sherrin and Barry Cryer, followed by after-show supper with wine.

Tickets at £90 each from
Nina Wilkins, 0171-976 8026

Health resort

Sir,

I have been a subscriber to PRIVATE EYE *for several years now, but I regret to advise you that I will not be renewing my subscription next month for health reasons.*

Much as I enjoy the EYE *I get so angry and overwhelmed with such a feeling of impotence when I read about all those people who are ripping off society and who seldom seem to lose their jobs or go to jail or whatever. I refer, for example, to the local government officials who get suspended for years on full pay when they should be fired on the spot and others in authority who appoint relatives to cushy jobs or direct work their way. And yet they nearly always seem to get away with it!*

I cannot stand it any more. Sorry.

HARVEY TAYLOR,
Address supplied.

"Mum, Dad, I've got something to tell you – I'm a homophobic"

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"Look at the black shirts, swarming like bumble bees, keeping their fingers in the dyke without any trouble at all."
BILL McLAREN, BBC1
(Ken Wilson)

"The ageless Dennis Wise — now in his thirties..."
MARTIN TYLER, Sky Sports
(Paul Kaye)

"Everything he [David Mellor] is involved in, he goes in hard and he goes in deep."
SAM HAMMAN (Wimbledon FC owner), ITV
(David Desborough)

Caller: *There are too many foreign players in the league.*
Mark Lawrenson: *Why do you think that is?*
Caller: *Because there are a lot of them.*
Radio 5
(Alex Wilkins)

"Pilsudski is out in front, but only by virtue of the fact that that's where he is."
Commentator, Radio 5
(David Stephenson)

"And this is the kitschen..."

FUNNY OLD WORLD

"Three times every day I put their dung in my eyes. Already I feel much better, but I still can't see." *(Hong Kong Standard, 3/11/97. Spotter: Noel Long)*

—o—

o "It's good for anything," said Hem Nan, holding aloft two small plastic bags, one filled with urine, the other with dung. "Aching muscles, headaches, fatigue, piles, genital warts. From now on, I shall eat the fruit and drink the nectar of the cow whenever I am ill."

Forty-year-old Hem Nan was one of hundreds of people who had flocked to the southern Cambodian village of Bat Treng to consume the excrement of (and be licked by) Preah Ko and Preah Keo, two miracle-working cows. "These cows are reincarnations of Gods" she continued, "and they have cured many people. They licked the leg of a lame man, and now he can now walk with a stick. They cured a malnourished woman by drinking from her family's cistern, although she later died. And I myself ate an entire cow pat yesterday, and I feel great and walk tall. What more proof could anyone need?"

A blind man, Heng Pros, told reporters that he had been with the cows for two weeks, in an attempt to restore his sight.

o *"The problem was that we couldn't handcuff Mr Shallo because he didn't have any hands," Plainfield Police Chief Edward Santiago told reporters in New Jersey, "so we just put him on the back seat of the car and hoped he wouldn't be able to get out. The incident has certainly shown us that officers shouldn't underestimate handicapped people, because they can be far more resourceful than you'd ever suspect."*

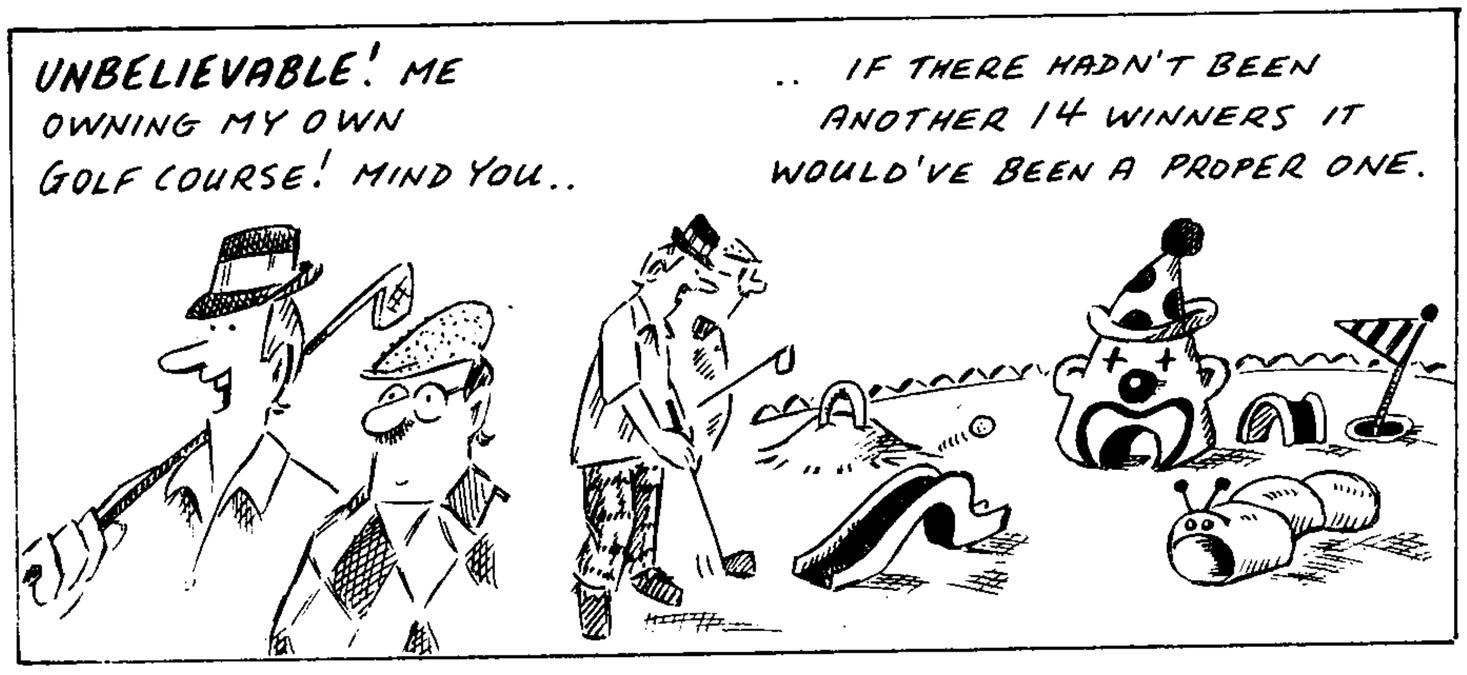
Ernest Vincent Shallo, a thirty-year-old multiple amputee from Piscataway, escaped from an unmarked police car after being arrested for drug possession. "He has no hands or forearms, and only one leg, so we couldn't restrain him in the normal way. We thought he was helpless, but when our backs were turned, he slid over to the passenger door, used his appendages to open it, and hopped away real fast. We pursued him but he hopped over several fences and somehow escaped on a bicycle. We couldn't believe it. He can pedal with only one foot, and without touching the handlebars. I think the guy must have worked for a circus at some time".

Shallo's neighbours confirmed this story. "Ernie rides a bike every day, though he can't use the brakes. I've even seen him carry washing machines on his back while on the bike. He fixed my lawnmower once. They say he can set his farts alight. I wouldn't put anything past him." (The Star-Ledger [Newark, New Jersey], 1/11/97. Spotter: Anita Daniel)

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

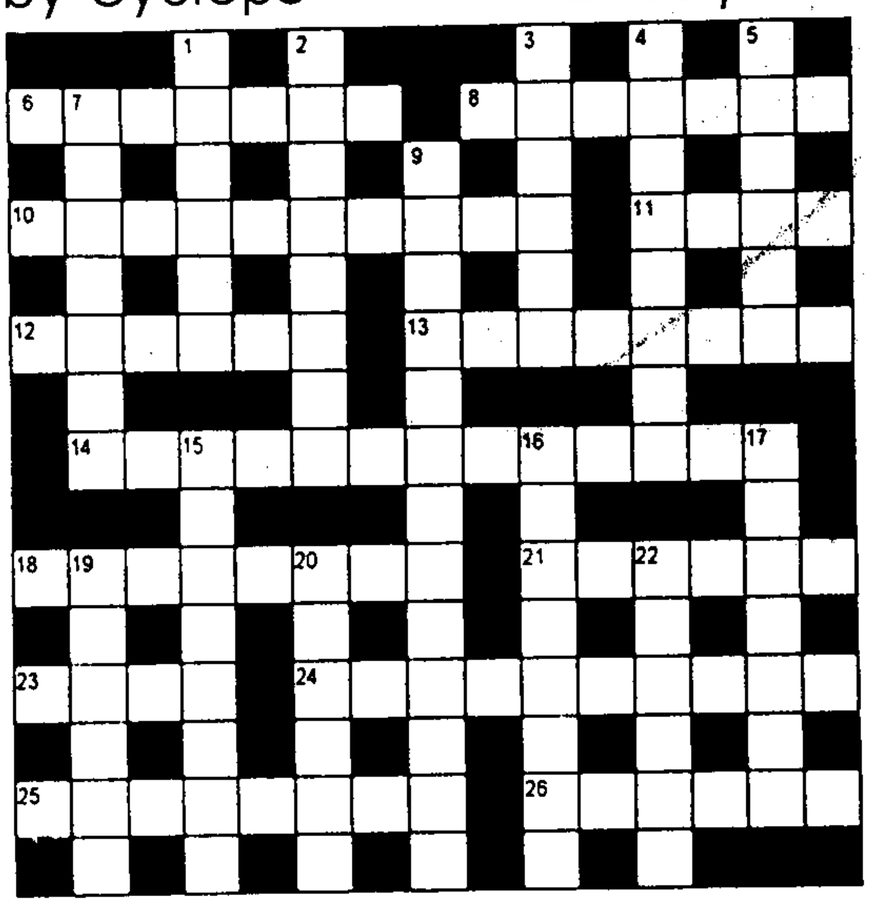
The Lottery Winners

TURNER



EYE CROSSWORD 93

by Cyclops *£100 prize*



ACROSS

6 Fanny behind this cover-up? Only just (1-6)
8 Intolerance towards gays, etc. — magnanimous Tory conversion (7)
10 God! One who might shaft his enemies as a contender for a capital administrator (4,6)
11 'Germans f-off!': Al-Fayed's foreign accommodation (4)
12 Against being hugged by archdeacon transsexual (6)
13 (see 21)
14 Our bizarre stories of rich Europe compared with America? (5,3,5)
18 Group that leaves one in suspense without recourse to the law (5,3)
21/13 Community benefits from friendly masses? (6,8)
23 One gets mounted in a short time (4)
24 Invigorating air needed by someone bonking — alarmingly, it's being depleted (5,5)
25 Lapsed feminist to the point when gobbling one? (8)
26 Self-important, having experienced an erection? Shame! (6)

DOWN

1 Direct crappy item at the end of the film? (6)
2 Plea made by wolf during penetration (8)
3 Mucky rag, indispensable driving aid? (6)
4 Royal hanger-on reportedly discovered having one with Brenda (8)
5 Toss off White without resistance (6)
7 Flaunter's performance in bad taste (4-3)
9 Referee whom employer would rather was less revealing (7-6)
15 Such as 'Brillo Pad' can handle (8)
16 A complete failure performed an after-dinner function (6,2)
17 Revered royal to wallop court, in a manner of speaking (7)
19 American jerk on amphetamines (6)
20 Reveal some bum that's beneath a church member! (6)
22 Appendix snipped and wrapped in blubber is disgustingly useless (6)

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 05.12.97. Entries to "Crossword", Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.

Solution to Crossword No. 92

Winner: KEITH BADMAN

ACROSS: 5/7dn/10 Private Members Bill 7 Mounts 8 Jekyll 9 Edmonton 10 (see 5) 11 Whitehall 12 Organ transplant 16 Media hype 18 Iowa 19 Anecdote 20 Bottom 21 Phlegm 22 Redneck.

DOWN: 1 Callow 2 Hereditary peers 3 Turn tail 4 Stroll 5 Premier 6 Idyll 7 (see 5) 13 Addicted 14 (see 18dn) 15 New York 16 Months 17 Embeds 18/14 In the Tearoom.

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

Look, this isn't easy for me! But I know that I owe everyone in the parish a really heartfelt and sincere apology! You know what I am talking about! I'm really sorry for the fact that so many people seem to have misunderstood what I was trying to do when I put the tobacco adverts in the last issue of the parish news.

I'm really sorry if some of you thought that, just because I've always said that I wouldn't take adverts for cigarettes in the newsletter, the fact that I *did* meant that in some way I'd gone back on my word!

O ye of little faith! *(Mark 7, 6)*

What I'm most sorry about is that some really malicious people have tried to make out that my decision to include the advertisements might have been connected to the fact that Mr Ecclestone, who has the tobacco kiosk in the garage, contributed £150 to the fund for restoring the church roof.

Look. I want to make it clear that I'm a completely honest, straight guy! *(Luke 21, 13)*

You know this! Which is why you all wanted me as your vicar!

I'm the same vicar now as I was when I first walked into St Albion's six months ago.

I'm sorry if anyone has made the mistake of thinking otherwise!

And anyway, I want everyone to know that I have personally made sure that arrangements will be made to return Mr Ecclestone's cheque just as soon as it is humanly possible!

What could be fairer than that? *(John 12, 34)*

So, let's hear no more unpleasant suggestions that I have in any way failed you in my stewardship over the affairs of this parish.

Everything I have done has been completely open and above board, and anyone who suggests that I haven't, should really be offering me an apology! *(No names, but Mr Livingstone may feel embarrassed reading this!)*

As we say in church every Sunday, "Forgive us our failings as we forgive those who haven't been nice to us". *(Book of Common Blair, p.249)*

I've certainly forgiven all of you for your lack of trust over the past week or two.

It's time now to move on to new pastures, and to draw a line under this regrettable incident once and for all!

I hope you enjoy the advertisement for Benson and Hedges on p.6. But please note the health warning underneath!

We all know that smoking is thoroughly nasty and anti-social and we must do everything we possibly can to discourage it, but we all have to live in the real world!

Tony

"ST ALBION'S — THE PEOPLE'S CHURCH"

FROM THE CHURCHWARDEN, MR MANDELSON

I have to say that members of this parish and I will not get on if the criticism of Tony does not stop at once. Tony and the PCC have acted at all times with complete and exemplary rectitude. Anyone who makes slanderous remarks about Tony will not just forfeit the right to attend church, but may well find themselves on the receiving end of legal proceedings instituted by Mr Lairg of Lairg and Co. You have been warned.

P. Mandelson, Churchwarden

Notices

- The title of the talk to be given by Mrs Harman to the Single Mothers' Union has been changed due to unforeseen circumstances. The original title **"More Cash For Single Parents Makes Sense"** has been altered to **"Why These Idle Spongers Must Get Back To Work"**.
- Plenty of tickets available from Mr Field.

Verses By A Local Poet

Winter comes, with a nip in
the air.
Thank God for the warmth of
Tony Blair!

From Mr Paul Johnson, aged 98, the St Albion's Secure Home For Distressed In Mind Gentlefolk.

(This poem was sent in by a friend of the poet, Lady Powell, who writes, "Mr Johnson is doing awfully well, and has some periods of lucidity when he writes his little poems! He would appreciate any visitors, but they should be sure to take protective clothing!")

To Remember In Your Prayers

Mr Lairg, our solicitor, who has had a lot of poison-pen letters, just because he has been given church funds to redecorate his office. The fact that he has chosen expensive-quality wallpaper only shows how much he cares for his work and the work of the community! Derry is a friend of mine which should be quite enough to convince you that he is a straight and honest kind of guy!

TB

YOURLETTERS

Dear Sir,

I deeply resent the suggestion from the vicar that I offered to make a second donation to church funds in addition to the £210 I had already given and in fact what happened was that the vicar and Mr Mandelson, the church warden, came to my kiosk and

Yours faithfully,

Mr Bernard Ecclestone, The Kiosk,

The Editor welcomes contributions from everyone but reserves the right to cut all letters for reasons of space.

Thanks!

THANK YOU INDEED to Mr Earl, who owns the **Burger Restaurant** in the Shopping Centre, for his incredibly generous gift of £150 to church funds! Thank goodness there are still some people in this parish who have not been corrupted by all the cynicism around! This is the Giving Ages, so let us all give generously with no thought about what we'll get in return! ***(Letter to the Ecclestonians, 11.4)***

Advertisement

THE VICAR'S FAVOURITE NITE-SPOT

Good, clean fun at reasonable prices!

THE EYE SALUTES THE PEOPLE'S QUEEN — 50 GLORIOUS YEARS

ST CAKES RAIDED IN DAWN PORN SWOOP

by Our Education Staff **Lunchtime O'Boys**

THE headmaster of St Cakes, the £6,000-a-term public school in the Midlands, was last night helping the police with their enquiries following the arrest of his entire staff and the seizure of the contents of the St Cakes school library.

The raid on St Cakes followed a complaint by parents about the school magazine, *The Cakeian*. The magazine usually carries reports of inter-house football matches, poems by sixth formers about the environment and reviews of the recent production of *Oliver*. However, in the current issue (Quinquasexima Term), the contents include photographs of the naked Geography Master (Mr C.D. "Grubby" Website) with members of the Remove in the showers.

Mr R.J. Kipling, speaking through his solicitors (Messrs Ben, Down and Smart) insisted that the school had nothing to hide.

"St Cakes has a long and proud tradition of paedophilia and it is one of the reasons why parents send their children here. It is all in the prospectus*."

Meanwhile, in his absence, the 14th century single-sex independent boys school (founded 1924) is being temporarily run by Mr G. Glitter (O.C.) who has stepped in at short notice.

The school is determined to continue as normal and has issued the following notices:

Fumblings will be run over the Upper Bottom on Dec 12th.

Trousers will come down on Dec 22nd (St Bandit's Day).

The service of Nine Lessons and Carols will be held in "C" Block of the Esther Rantzen Children's Home due to the choir having been taken into care.

28-page full-colour prospectus is available from the Bursar (Prisoner 7472412, 'A' Wing, Wormwood Scrubs)

Who Do You Blame For Pop Star's Tragic End?

You decide who was responsible for Michael Hutchence's death in the Sun's People's Jury (shortly to replace the official coroner in all civilised countries).

Was it:

a) Bob Geldof?
b) Kylie Minogue?
c) Jonah Lomu?
d) The Teletubbies?
e) Rolf Harris?
f) The Spice Girls?
g) Michael Fish?
h) Himself *(surely some mistake?)*

Phone NOW and waste someone's time! 0898752 347

BOXING

BATTERSEA TOWN HALL

Heavyweight Contest over all the newspapers *(shurely 'over ten rounds'?)*

FRANK BRUNO (formerly world champion) — vs — **MRS BRUNO** (formerly his wife)

REFEREE
His Honour Lord Justice Cocklecarrot

Our Boxing Correspondent writes: Frank has found yet another pushover to knock around the kitchen *(shurely 'ring'? Ed.)*.

Yes! It's Britain's Newest Fanzine

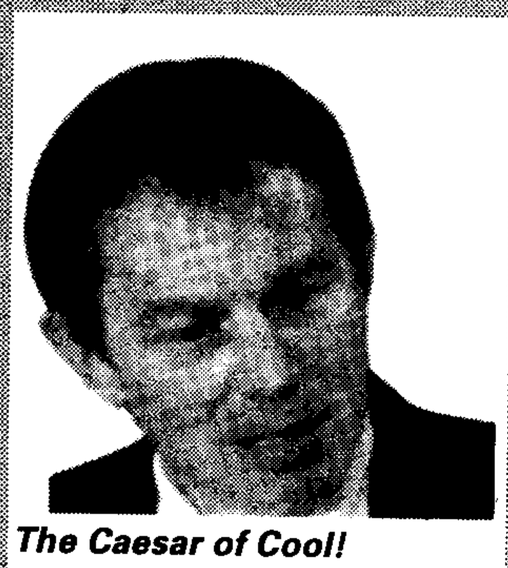
BLAIRZONE

HAIRZONE!

Yes! The whole country has gone Tony Hair crazee! Tony's new look locks have sent everyone out to the hairdressers to get that Tone Tonsure!

Tony says, "It's fresh, it's new, it's happening and it's not an attempt to distract attention from the imminent break-up of the band".

In the words of the late great Beatles "Be Hair Now" or as the Oasis put it "Hair There and Everywhere"!



The Caesar of Cool!

There's no mistake — Tone is top of the Mop-Tops!

Tony's Swingin' Salon Songs

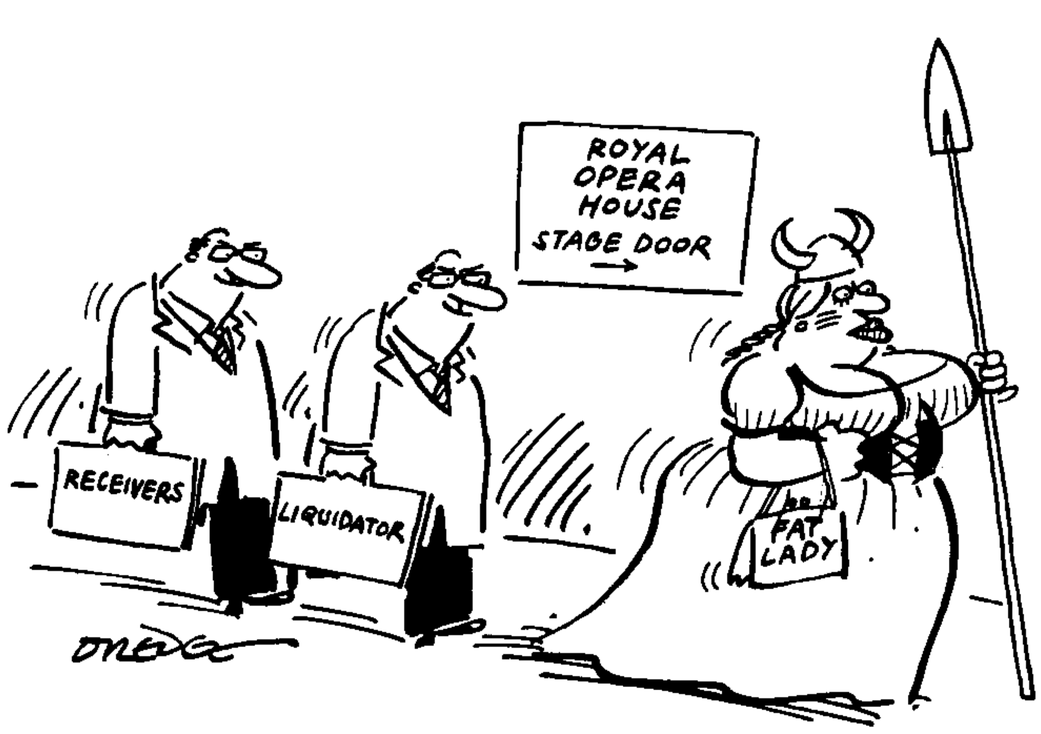
Tales of Trichological Operations — Yes
Boy Meets Problems — Haircut £100
Barber Ann — The Beached Boy
Nutbrush City — Ike & Tina U-Turner
I'll be your Short-Haired Lover from Islington — Jimmy Osmond

Kidz Offer!

You too can look like Tony with the sensational plastic Tony Wig! Fans will mob you in the street! Babes will throw themselves at your feet! Millionaires will press money into your hand! BE COOL! BE TONY!

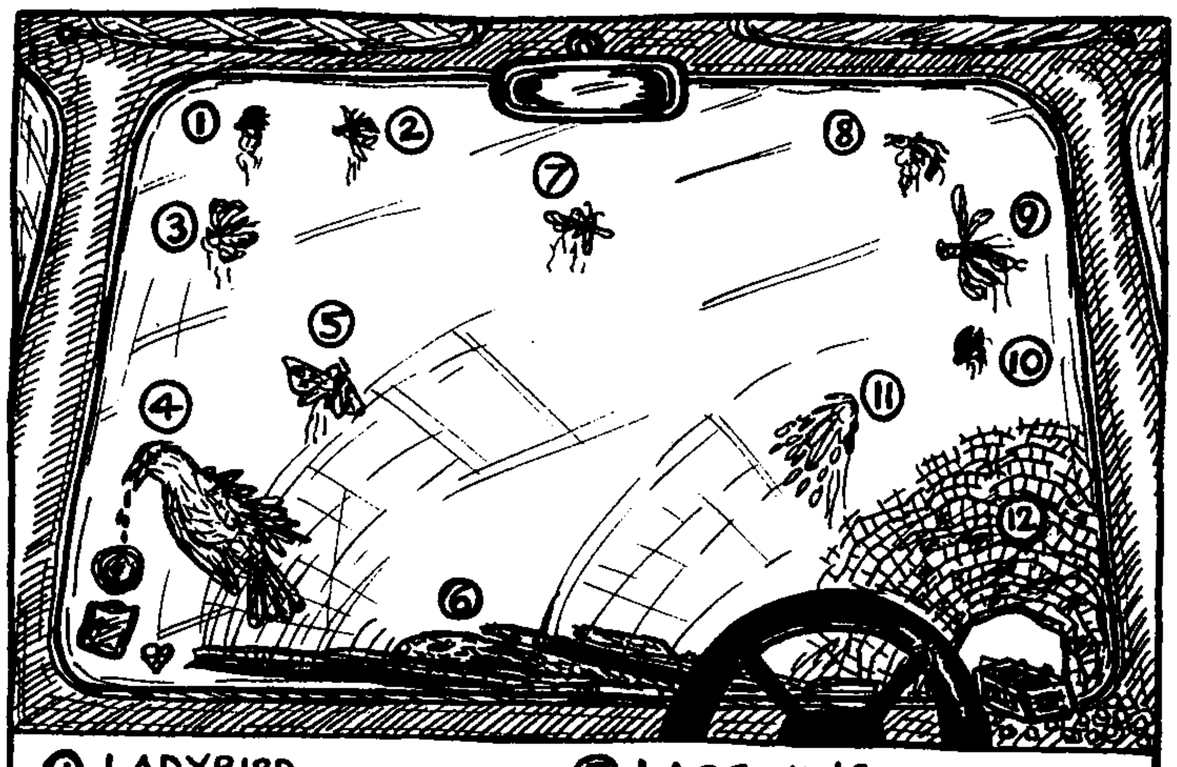
Tone's Thought For Now

In the words of the late great El-Tony John "Sorry seems to be the easiest word" so, sorry!
See ya!



Apparently... BY MIKE BARFIELD

4WD WINDSCREEN WILDLIFE GUIDE



① LADYBIRD
② CRANEFLY
③ CINNABAR MOTH
④ SKYLARK
⑤ PEACOCK BUTTERFLY
⑥ YOUNG HARE
⑦ LACEWING
⑧ DEVIL'S COACHMAN BEETLE
⑨ COMMON DRAGONFLY
⑩ DUNG BEETLE
⑪ CLASS WARRIOR *SPITTLE*
⑫ ANTI-HUNT PROTESTOR

In Memoriam Sir Jams Fishpaste

A NON-service of remembrance in thanks for the money of Sir Jammy Goldfinger was staged today in the deconsecrated church of St James, Goldsmith Square. Sir David Frost read from the *Reader's Digest Book Of Quotes About Famous Men* (edited D. Frost, £5.99). Baroness Thatcher attacked the Maastricht Treaty and spoke movingly about how useless John Major had been compared to herself. Dr Henry Kissinger read a tribute to himself from *Time* Magazine. Mr John Aspinall spoke for an hour and a half on "Our Brother The Orang-Utan". Mr Edward Goldsmith gave a party political broadcast on behalf of the Green Party. Chief Mangochutney Brutallazy led the congregation in a Zulu battle hymn. Other musical contributions included a group of unemployed Mexican prawn fishermen, Los Referendos, singing a selection of traditional Acapulco nightclub melodies; *Putting On The Writs* was sung by Sir Peter Carter-Ruck (tenner); and the Original New Orleans Marmite Five played *When Sir Jams Go Marching In*. The congregation was then allowed to join in with a specially adapted version of *Jerusalem*, beginning with the words: "And did those feet in ancient times, Walk upon Mexico's mountains green."

Among those present were Lady Letitia Goldsmith (wife); Madame Fifi La Maitresse (wife); Lady Cosi Fantutti (mistress); plus several other wives and mistresses; Mr Imran Everyoneout (son-in-law) and Miss Jemima Puddleduck (daughter).

Other guests included Mr Taki Takalotofcokeupthenos (representing the Sir James Goldenwonder Fan Club); Lady Carla Powercrazy; Count Lichtenstein Holstenlager; the Grand Duchess Legovia of the Cayman Islands; Mr Paul Johnson (representing the League of Redfaced Lunatics); the Lord Really-Smugg; Mr Jonathan Aitken; Mr Neil Hamilton; Mr Ronald Biggs; the late Lord Lucan; Mr Benito Mussolini; Lord Slater-Walker; Mr Alan Clark and various young women; Mr Slobodan Milosevic; General Pinochet; the Lord McAlpine; Sir Conrad Blackadder; Mr Rupert Murder; and many other distinguished visitors from all over the known world.

A referendum was then held as to whether it was time to go off for lunch, and 99.3 per cent voted "Yes. So long as we don't have to listen to a poem by Taki."

Restoration of Windsors a triumph

by Our Architectural Staff Sir Gawaine Commemorative Stamp

ONLY two months ago it seemed that the Windsors had been damaged beyond repair.

They had been reduced to a smoking ruin, covered with a thick film of filth and sleaze and blackened by every hack in Fleet Street.

But today, incredible as it seems, they have been lovingly restored to their former glory by a team of Britain's finest craftsmen.

Brown Nose Windsor Soup

Working round the clock, with the traditional materials of newspaper articles and television reports, these experts have utterly transformed the Windsors into a stunning replica of a popular monarchy.

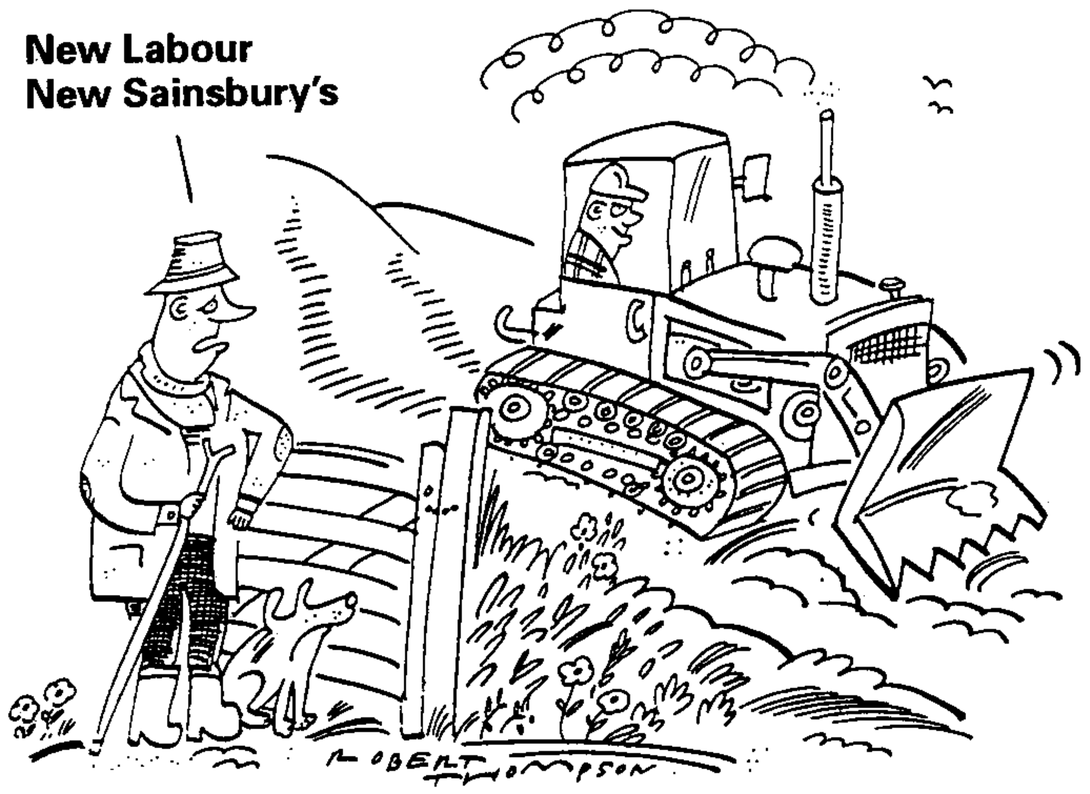
● *The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh have been regilded as a devoted couple who have stuck together for 50 years.*

● *Prince Charles has undergone extensive refurbishment to make him safe to the public.*

● *The Queen Mother, who had avoided the worst of the damage, has now been dusted down and brought out to save the life of a toddler.*

When the new-look House of Windsor was unveiled today, critics gasped with admiration and cried: "God Save Our Gracious Press! We know how to sell newspapers".

New Labour
New Sainsbury's



BANK TO BECOME 'EVEN MORE INDEPENDENT' Brown's Shock Pledge

by Our City Staff **Fred Needle**

IN A move to reinforce the independence of the newly independent Bank of England, Chancellor Gordon Brown is to sack all the existing members of the board and replace them with a new board more in keeping with the new modern Britain of the 1990s.

The new board will comprise the following entirely independent members:

Mr Bill Morris, an impartial trade unionist and leader of Britain's black community.

Sir Ian McKellen, an independent Labour supporter representing the theatrical and gay communities.

Baroness Blackstone, an independent personal friend of Mr Tony Blair and a leading member of Britain's woman community.

The Spice Girls, five independent economists representing the girl power movement.

Mr Gordon Brown, an independent Chancellor representing the business community.

Mr Eddie George, a banker, is to be retained as the Chief Bringer-In Of The Teatime Biscuits.

To further demonstrate its independent status, the Bank is to be renamed 'The People's Bank of Great Britain'.

(Reuter)

IS IT ALL OVER FOR WORLD'S MOST POPULAR GROUP?

by Our Pop Staff **Lunchtime O'Asis**

HAS THE bubble burst for the group that took the world by storm and only six months ago were voted the most popular band of all time in a national poll?

Their faces looked out from every poster and hoarding.

They represented the new, cool, go-ahead Britain of the '90s.

But today the knives are out. The critics say they were all just a product of slick marketing men.

That they were all just hype and gloss, rather than talent.

Only two weeks ago, they were being photographed with Nelson Mandela.

But today they are too scared even to show their faces in interviews.

Everyone seems to be agreed that the phenomenon they called New Labour is finished.

Who were they, the Fab Five who until this week could do no wrong?

● **Blairy Spice**, the leader. His cheeky smile and casual weekend look bewitched a nation.

● **Batey Spice**, the sinister and angry power behind the group, known for his very short skirts *(shurely 'temper'? Ed)*.

● **Ginger Spice**, so-called because of his ginger beard — the sexy one who was booed on their tour of India.

● **Spoil-Sporty Spice**, the dour, Scottish one who kept his eye on the group's finances — thanks to his meannness, they are now billions in the red.

● **Posh Spice** (real name Harriet Harperson), so-called because she sends her kids to selective, non-state, grant-maintained schools.

Pop experts like "Red" Ken Livingstone and Matthew "Gay Paree" say that the group's downfall began when they sacked all their principles *(cont p. 94)*.

Blairy **Batey** **Ginger** **Spoil-Sporty** **Posh**

'TOLERANCE IS THE KEY' says Prince Philip

by Our Royal Staff **Ingrid Sewage**

THE DUKE of Edinburgh, in a relaxed and informal speech last night, described what he felt was the essential ingredient in a happy relationship with the monarchy.

"You have to be very tolerant of us," he said, "and very understanding of our foibles.

"Over the course of a thousand years we are bound to develop irritating little habits like wealth and arrogance, and you must be prepared to ignore them." He continued: "It is all about give and take. You do the giving and we do the taking.

"As in any relationship, there are bound to be arguments — but the important thing is to forgive and forget. We'll forgive your imperinence if you forget the whole Diana business."

He concluded: "As I say, tolerance is the greatest virtue of all. Now piss off and leave us alone."

Abdul Aziz ibn Baz, the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia (the official expounder of Islamic Law) considered the participation of woman in work and her association with men on job is one of the great means of adultery and matrimony unfaithfulness.

Al-Muslimon Weekly

World of Soccer

SWISS BOSS FOR NEASDEN AS BIG RON QUITS

by **E.I. Erewego**, Our Man In The Stands With The Phone Number Of A Man Who Mends PCs And Does Not Tell The Police What You've Downloaded From The Internet

THE soccer world was rocked to its foundations last night when, after years of speculation, Neasden's legendary supremo Ron Knee, 57, finally quit.

The decision follows a string of bad results. Neasden have won only one of their last 1,458 matches and are currently bottom of the North Circular Relegation League.

Swiss Role

Speaking about Knee's departure, Neasden's chairman, the self-operating laundry outlets to adult home video entertainment magnate Sir Buffy Cohen MBE, explained: "Big Ron came to me and said that he needed time to recharge his batteries. The cardiac wing of the Royal Neasden had written to him recently to say the batteries of his pacemaker needed recharging and now there was a bed available."

As an ashen-faced Knee packed his bags, it was announced that his replacement is to be the little-known Swiss manager, Rolan Gnee, 57.

Who Gnee?

So who is he, the Swiss boss who takes on the task of rebuilding Neasden? These are the facts:

- He is Swiss.
- He comes from Switzerland.
- He is 57.

But the Neasden fans (Sid and Doris Bonkers) are far from impressed. "From what we can gather," said a cautious Sid, "all he has managed so far is a bank. What good is that to us? We want goals not gold."

However, Sir Buffy is confident he has the right man for the job. "Switzerland is full of mountains," he said, "and Neasden have a mountain to climb."

Ron Knee is 57.

LATE RESULT

Vick's Vapour Rub Cup, First Round, Second Leg

AFC Neasden 0
Warminster-on-Sea 5
(Pike 1, Jones 2, Wilson 1, Pevsner [o.g.] 1)

BRITAIN'S BEST-LOVED CARTOON CHARACTER SAVED

by Our Children's Staff **Beryl the Bainbridge**

DESPERATE TONE, the most famous creation of the comic *Mandy*, has been reprieved after it looked as if he was on the way out. Desperate Tone was once the most popular character in the whole cartoon world but the public began to tire of him and his strongman antics.

Luckily, just as it looked as though his adventures were at an end, his creators have changed their minds and allowed him back with a special episode in which he eats a huge amount of humble pie. He now seems set to keep everyone amused for years to come. Desperate Dan is 47% ahead of Billy the Not-Much-of-a-Whizz.

As Seen On TV

Call My Duff

TWO teams of panellists try to guess the name of the famous TV producer whose wife Fiona Duff has rubbished him in the Daily Mail for running off with the daughter of a *Call My Bluff* star.

Chairman: And the first word is "Thompson".

Coren: Well, a "Thompson" is the sort of bloke who comes along looking perfectly innocent, and then, blimey, what do you know, he walks off with your daughter. I say, string him up. What a bastard. That's a "Harry".

(Other team all hold up cards saying "True")

POETRY CORNER

Lines on the retirement of Sir Peter O'Sullevan, BBC racing commentator

So. Farewell then
Peter O'Sullevan.
The BBC's
Voice of
Racing.

"They're off!"
That was
Your catchphrase
And now

You are too.

E.J. Thribb, the "Voice of Poetry" (aged 17-1)

Bit of a head in here de blah de blah of a head in here de blah de blah with byline

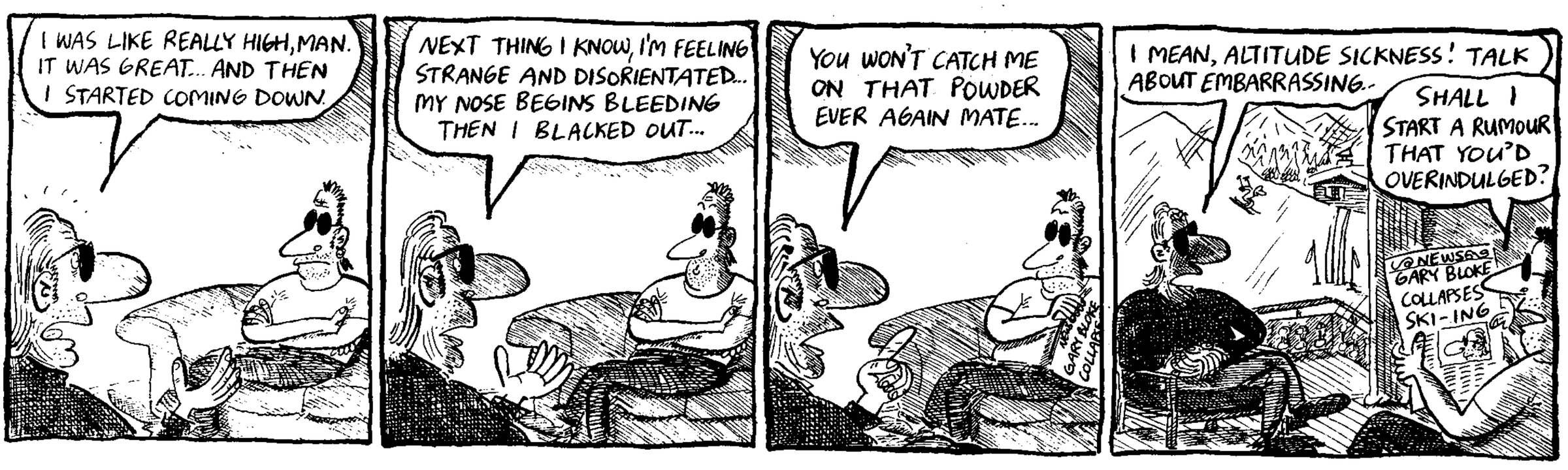
Grauniad

Tony Blair promises parents the right to smack

Independent

Celeb

LIGGER


I WAS LIKE REALLY HIGH, MAN. IT WAS GREAT... AND THEN I STARTED COMING DOWN.
NEXT THING I KNOW, I'M FEELING STRANGE AND DISORIENTATED... MY NOSE BEGINS BLEEDING THEN I BLACKED OUT...
YOU WON'T CATCH ME ON THAT POWDER EVER AGAIN MATE...
NEWSFLASH GARY BLOKE COLLAPSES SKI-ING
I MEAN, ALTITUDE SICKNESS! TALK ABOUT EMBARRASSING..
SHALL I START A RUMOUR THAT YOU'D OVERINDULGED?
NEWSFLASH GARY BLOKE COLLAPSES SKI-ING

QUEEN MEETS BLAIR AT PEOPLE'S BANQUET

That People's Menu in full

Person-Size Prawns in Garlic

— ❋ —

Life Baron of Beef

— ❋ —

Mr Edward Potatoes, Baked Not In Their Dinner-Jackets

— ❋ —

Commoner of Puddings

— ❋ —

To drink:

Vin Ordinary Working-Class People

followed by

Monsieur Napoleon Brandy

— ❋ —

The Queen will propose the Loyal Toast to Mr Blair. After this, no one may smoke except Mr Ecclestone.

"Don't you think Blair is taking this common touch thing a bit far?"

LATE NEWS

Gravy Train Robber still at large

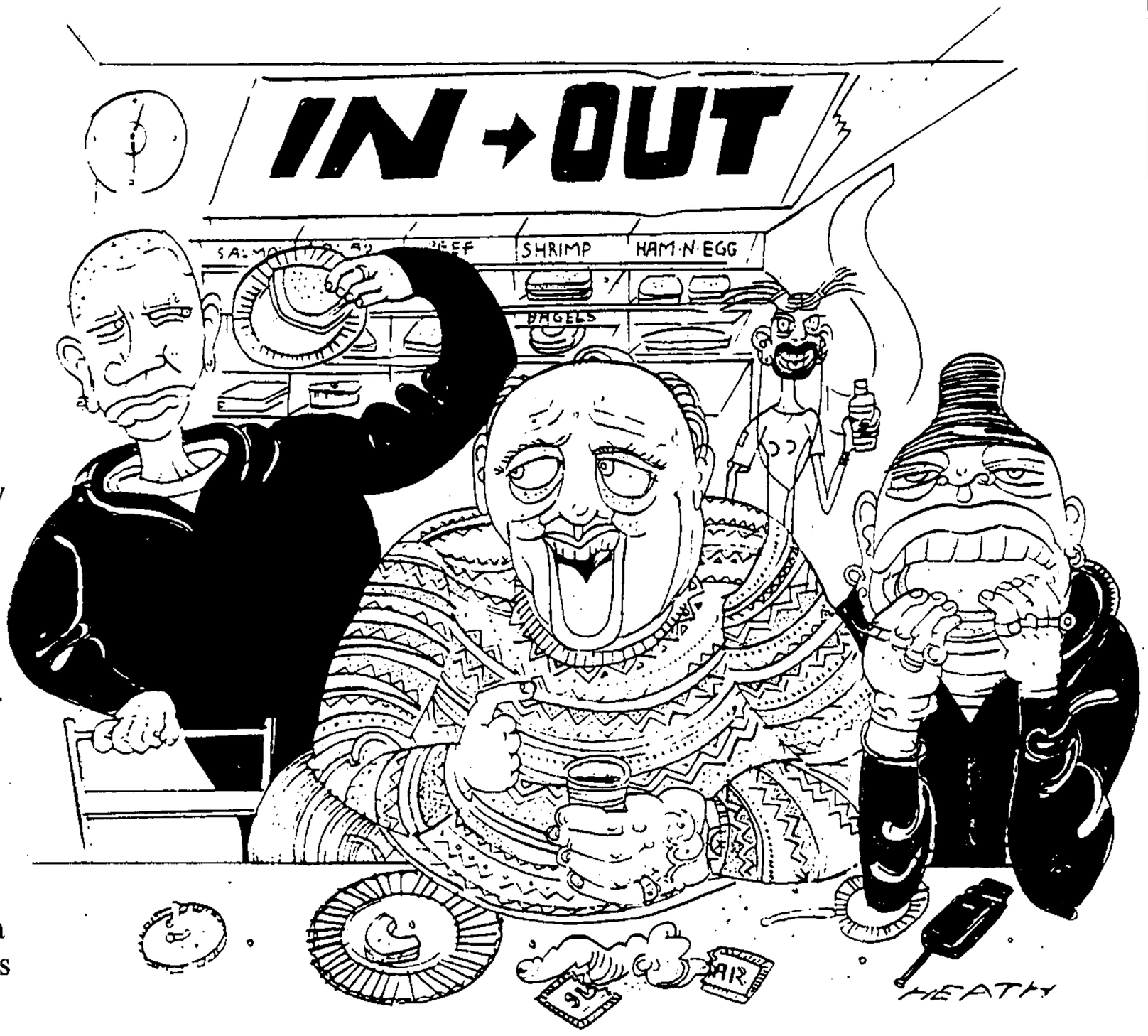
IT IS now clear that the infamous gravy train robber, Neil Hamilton, is still at large and on the run from the truth. Hamilton, who has not been lying low for the last couple of years, has been spotted in various locations during that period, including a television studio and a radio studio, as well as on the cover and the insides of several daily newspapers.

Said the notorious outlaw: "All I want is a fair trial, an advance for my book, the rights to the movie, a TV show of my own, five grand in used notes, and to be given back my job as an MP. Honestly, anyone would've thought I was some kind of criminal." *(Reuter)*

Harry Enfield's **Bores** Drawn by **Michael Heath**

26. Boring Spice

"I said it wouldn't last so much for girl power got too big for their platforms totally over-exposed apparently you can get their faces on bog paper now sacked their manager apparently he was sleeping with all of them except Toffee Nosed Spice who's apparently going out with Bobby Charlton or something a friend of mine's friend's brother once had a fling with Geri apparently she's not a natural ginger ha ha ha no apparently Sporty Spice is the prettiest when they haven't got their make-up on apparently they've each made ten billion quid apparently Scary Spice *is* actually slightly scary in real life apparently it's going to cost ten million quid to get Gary Glitter out of the film apparently he was the best thing in it apparently the film's terrible apparently none of them can read or write apparently one of them used to do porn films apparently it's on the net apparently Nelson Mandela thought they were the Beverley Sisters apparently it's not them singing at all apparently Baby Spice's real name is Maureen Penge…"



DIARY

Just when I thought this country was at last growing up, along comes Prince Charles to squash that daft illusion.

The Prince — my bestselling biography of the bloke made him famous overnight — has been spotted putting his arms around his two sons, William and Harry.

Has he never heard of germs?

From his ivory tower — and a very luxurious ivory tower it is too, thank you very much — he must be the last person on earth to realise that some of the most disturbing diseases — impetigo, asian flu, cholera, amoebic dysentery, even AIDS — can be communicated through casual touch.

This column is certainly not saying that Charles, as he used to sign his letters to me, is jealous of his two sons. Or that he would necessarily wish them dead.

But this Germgate incident does raise very serious constitutional issues about the suitability of this man — at best naive, at worst downright wicked — to become our future sovereign.

Is it not time for the heir to the throne to skip a generation?

Sometimes I think the Queen should come down to earth and live among us lesser mortals. Down here, some of us have to work for a living.

How many of the rest of us can afford a full-blown service of thanksgiving for our marriages in Westminster Abbey — followed by a slap-up dinner at the swanky restaurant of our choice?

And forgive me but wasn't Her Majesty's choice of hymns and readings a touch vulgar?

But then I've said all along the Windsors don't know the first thing about dignity. And think of all the money they make from their vociferous bad taste! In the past week, I've made the point successfully on Talk Radio, Radio Five Live, the Kilroy Show, Newsbeat on Radio 1, Richard and Judy, the Chris Evans breakfast programme and the top-paying Esther show on BBC1.

At least someone has the nerve to take on the murky Establishment and tell it like it is.

And I promise you this. This is one journalist they'll never silence. I'm fiercely independent of the Royals — as I'll demonstrate on monarchy debates on Channel 4 News, The Jimmy Young Programme and The Sky Royal Scandal Hour in the next couple of days.

ANTHONY HOLDEN
'THE MAN IN THE KNOW'

And here was me thinking the Royal Family was setting about "modernising" itself. Some hope.

The last time I saw Prince Charles, whose bestselling biography I once wrote, in the company of his two sons, Princes Wills and Harry, he didn't even bother to put a fatherly arm around their young shoulders. When you think what those two lads have been through in the past few months, it makes you seethe with rage.

So much for a new-look, loving, caring monarchy.

Sad to say, Prince Charles is one Royal leopard who'll never change his spots.

A word about myself for a change — a rare glimpse inside the mind of a Royal biographer.

For the past quarter of a century, I've carved myself a position as arguably the most respected Royal writer in the world, universally praised for my serious approach.

From my first Royal biography, "Charles: Prince Among Men" (1978), through my early studies of the Royal Family, including "Our Living Treasure: A Biography of the Queen Mother" (1979), "Happy and Glorious: The Life of HM the Queen" (1980), "Tony Holden's Right Royal Quiz Book" (1983), "Zara Phillips: The Legend Beyond the Myth" (1983), "The Wit and Wisdom of the Duke of Edinburgh" (1985), "Edward: Prince Among Men" (1987), "Her Grace: A Biography of the Duchess of York" (1989) and "A Princely Marriage: Charles and Diana, the First Ten Years" (1991), my work always adopted a clear-sighted view of the Monarchy, buttressed by my broad-ranging republican sympathies and my philosophical interest in greater democratic accountability.

Following the popular success of Andrew Morton's "Diana: Her True Story", and the relatively modest sales recorded for my perhaps over-scholarly biographical study "Bonny Prince Harry: The First Eighteen Months", I began to wonder if I was doing the right thing, both for myself and more importantly for the country as a whole. In future, I wanted all my accounts to be much fuller. I therefore made a radical reappraisal of the Windsors. After completing "Happy and Glorious: A Windsor Celebration by Anthony Holden" (1990), I felt that a more robustly democratic approach would strengthen my account.

The stories I began to hear about the Windsors appalled me, among them the dreadful tale of how they had ruined the career of a once-promising journalist by encouraging his lifelong dependency on hundreds of thousands of pounds made from churning out Royal potboilers.

From this major reappraisal sprang my next wave of best-selling Royal books, each as authoritative as the next: "Nancy Boy: Prince Edward at 35", "The Duchess of York: Fat Slag", "Naked Ambition: A Biography of Princess Alexandra", "King Shit: Prince Charles at 48", "A Marriage Made In Hell: The First 12 Years of Charles and Diana", "Diana, Queen of Hearts", "Diana, Queen of More Hearts", "Saint Diana, Queen of Heaven", "Diana and Tony: Their True Story", "The Illustrated Queen of Heaven" and, most recently, "Prince Charles: Assassin".

At last, a breath of fresh air.

Sadly, the Prince of Wales has no respect for the truth. He seems to have taken umbrage with me. At a concert in the Royal Albert Hall, he totally ignored me, even though I was clearly positioned just twenty-two rows back from him, and ten along. And it hasn't escaped my notice that he studiously avoids any mention of me in his speeches.

Well, Charles — two can play at that game. Sad, really. I could have been a great help to him in his chosen career, promoting him as our next King in my weekly column in *The Daily Express*. But now, once again, he's gone and blown it.

And our new, modern Britain will not lightly forgive him.

SUPERMODELS KERBER

Straw's pledge to rape victims
Express

Dog dirt in park - group leaders step in
Congleton Guardian

SUPERB FACILITIES
250 acres of lakes, sportsfields, woodland.
New Library, Languate Cnetre, Computer Centre.
Merchant Taylors' School

Literary Review

On the grave-y train

Violin
Anne Rice
(Chatto & Windus, £16.99)

NOW my dears, how, in a fraught and unpromising marketplace, does one set about acquiring literary celebrity? Let's say there are two ways.

The first route is to blaze in from nowhere, preferably with a massive publicity budget (good to have you aboard, Arundhati darling) and win a prize. The second, favoured by less respectable genre exponents, is a bit more incremental: solid product year on year, patience, word of mouth buzz, and then bingo! And so Anne Rice, 20 years into a career strewn with bones, plasma and pale white hands, finds herself being filmed with Tom Cruise (*Interview With The Vampire*) and, inter alia, one of the few safe earners on the Random House profit and loss account.

What's it all about? Well, popular gothic was never quite so enthusiastically promulgated than in these dank dispatches from the tomb. The thing about their author, a middle-aged Californian who enjoys striking appropriate attitudes on her book jackets, is her wholeheartedness. No one who read a chapter of her breathless prose, pregnant with the noise of distant footsteps and creaking doors, could doubt that she believed it all — the whole sorry caboodle of garlic, rosaries, time travel and the cadaverous embrace. As with many another popular practitioner, what sells these souffles is *sincerity*.

Violin features a diminutive 54 year old named Triana, all alone in the big house in New Orleans where her immensely wealthy second husband has just died of AIDS. Not troubling to tell anyone about this demise, she spends a couple of days snuggled up to the corpse before friends and family break in and start setting things to rights.

Curiously, this dreamy stakeout by the bedside is attended by violin music, courtesy of a mystery fiddler ("He was tall and gaunt, but not at all in an unattractive way. His black hair was unkempt and rock musician long, with two braids tied back to keep it from his face, and I remember I liked the way it hung down his back as he turned round") first glimpsed in the street the day before Karl's passing. Imagination fuelled by this pallid vagrant — not to mention various traumas involving family horrors past and present — she eventually gets to meet "Stefan Stefanowski", a revenant from the late eighteenth century, when he sashays moodily into the bedchamber one night.

Hunky Steff, needless to say, is a real piece of ectoplasm. Despite his arrogant mien, Triana wonders whether he can return her to her dead parents and daughter ("Bring them over to me. Bring them back over the divide"). This injunction, it turns out, is a very bad idea, as it's she who gets whisked back in time, in fact to Stefan's old stamping grounds in bygone Europe, and some lively chats with the likes of Beethoven and Paganini.

As you may imagine, these epoch-straddling encounters are quite delicious. The dialogue between Triana and Stefan, in particular, is all over the place: Stefan prosing on about her "clever intellectual West Coast friends" while Triana comes across like a Shakespeare heroine ("Go! It puts me in a perfect fury that you dare come in here without my bidding! Into my very room!") and every so often, like a great whiff of escaping marsh gas, the authentic Anne Rice atmosphere comes stealing fruitily across the page.

Here, for example, Triana wishes herself entombed with her dead loved ones: "Dig deep, deep, my soul, to find the heart — the blood, the heat, the shrine and resting place. Dig deep, deep into the moist soil all the way to where they lie, those I love — she, Mother, with her dark hair loose and gone, her bones long since tumbled into the back of the vault..." There's a happyish ending, in which Triana dances about with her sisters, but don't let me spoil it for you. The point about *Violin*, though, is that it isn't in the least unsettling. M.R. James is scary, even Stephen King has his moments, but not these treaties on topsoil excavation.

Here one begins to envy the original Germanic tribes who gave their name to the all-purpose late twentieth-century adjective with which this kind of stuff gets tagged. For the Gothic language, ironically enough, *bequeathed no literature*. They knew a thing or two, those Goths.

G.I. Jane Eyre

Books & Bookmen

■ **SAD tidings from the hectic round of pre-Christmas book signings.**

At a major bookstore in London's Victoria a session by Edwina Currie promoting her novel *Leaving Home* attracted just two punters. Amazingly, this was twice as many as turned up to see John Redwood signing his book about leaving Europe, which attracted just one punter.

☐HOW fascinating to note W.H. Smug's defence of its decision to sell books giving instructions on DIY ecstasy and spliff building. Smug spokesmen were heard to comment: "We do not act as censors." News to some of us...

MAKING A KILLING?

■ WHAT has happened to the book about the murder of Rachel Nickell by one of the top detectives involved in the hunt for the killer?

Former Det Insp Keith Pedder and his ghostwriter Martin Forrester finished the book last year. It was due to be published, for a hefty advance, by Transworld. All the experts in the media who still believe that Colin Stagg killed Rachel Nickell, although he was acquitted of the murder at the Old Bailey in 1994, were eagerly looking forward to the book.

The *Mail on Sunday*, Stagg-hunter in chief, was ready to serialise it. Arrangements were made for a sumptuous book launch at a Soho restaurant. Then everything went wrong.

On 15 September the *Sun* published the dramatic revelations of Siobhan Walsh, a former CID policewoman at Wimbledon. She told the paper she had started an affair with Pedder on the day Colin Stagg was charged — 17 August 1993. The affair lasted for four years during which Pedder continuously promised to leave his wife. When he didn't, and when he ordered Siobhan not to go to the press, she did just that.

In the *Daily Mail* on 20 September Siobhan talked in detail about Pedder's book. She claimed the original £100,000 advance for the book was conditional on Stagg's conviction — and was reduced to £85,000, to Pedder's fury, when Stagg was released.

There were other conditions in the contract. For instance, the book would not be published if anyone other than Stagg were convicted of the murder. These stories had an immediate effect on the publishers. They cancelled all plans to publish the book and washed their hands of it. No one at Transworld would tell the *Eye* anything about the book or the contract.

Keith Pedder vigorously denies that there was any agreement about the book before Stagg was acquitted in 1984. "I would never have written it if Stagg had been convicted," he claims. He says he has no publisher. He denies spending his £85,000 advance but won't say what happened to it. He says his book is "purely factual" and "no one would be happier than me if the person responsible for the murder is brought to justice."

'Bookworm'

SNIPCOCK & TWEED
THIS RUSHDIE / LE CARRE ROW SAYS A LOT ABOUT THEM AS NOVELISTS
The Guardian
Rushdie le Carré feud Latest
THEY GO ON AND ON, DON'T KNOW WHEN TO STOP, THE READERS ARE BORED AND EVERYONE'S LOST THE PLOT!

WATERSTONE'S
91 Deansgate, Manchester, M3
0161 832 1992
IAN HISLOP
signs copies of
THE 1997 PRIVATE EYE ANNUAL
and talks about
PRIVATE EYE
2nd December • 7pm • £3
Refreshments provided
If you can't attend, signed copies can be reserved by telephone from the bookshop

footnotes

ANDERSEN'S SHELTER

A HUGE sigh of relief and a volley of champagne corks went up in the offices of Arthur Andersen, one of the country's "big six" accountancy firms, when a settlement was announced on 15 November of its bitter 12-year legal tussle with the government.

The action dates back to the collapse of the glorious DeLorean scam which swindled £70m out of the British taxpayer for a ludicrous car project in Northern Ireland. The British government sued Arthur Andersen, DeLorean's auditor, alleging conspiracy, fraud and negligence.

Of special concern to the government was $17.5m of taxpayers' money dished out for design work which found its way into a Swiss-based Panamanian-registered company called GPD. Arthur Andersen knew about this payment and its dubious legality but did not tell the government. So outraged were the government accountants that they banned Arthur Andersen (though not its sister organisation Andersen Consulting) from all government audit work. Arthur Andersen claimed in its defence that the government had been so keen to get the money into Northern Ireland that it didn't take proper precautions against waste and/or fraud.

SIR GORDON BORRIE

PATRICIA HEWITT

On and on dragged the case, at fantastic expense to both sides with neither side willing to give way. The Tory government was intensely irritated when Andersen's got a court order to disclose the minutes of cabinet meetings and even insisted on a statement from Margaret Thatcher herself. This irritation continued in spite of (or perhaps because of) the long-standing presence on the Andersen payroll of former Tory leader Edward Heath.

Andersen's duly grew tired of the Tories, and soon after the 1992 election the firm started to take an interest in the Labour party. Andersen Consulting gave its services free to the commission for social justice, which carried out a detailed survey of future policy for the Labour party. The commission was chaired by Sir Gordon Borrie, former director of the office of fair trading, and a director of Mirror Group Newspapers whose new regime under David Montgomery was ushered in by the influential accountants, Arthur Andersen.

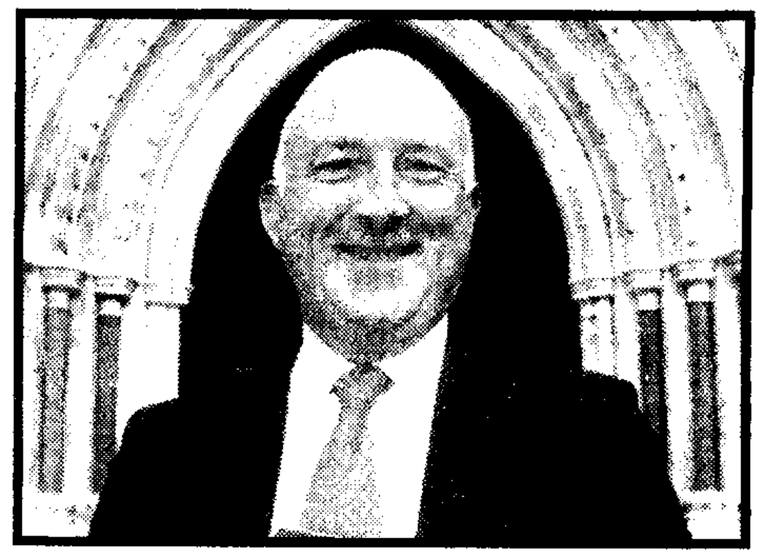
Borrie's report glowed with appreciation and gratitude for Andersen's. The Borrie commission's surveys on tax and benefits, for instance, which proved so influential on party policy, was carried out free by Andersen's. In a letter to the *Eye* in May 1994, Keith Burgess, managing partner of Andersen Consulting, explained his firm's involvement: "We too," he wrote, "are concerned with social justice."

On 12 May 1994, the day John Smith died, Andersen Consulting announced the appointment as director of research of Patricia Hewitt, Neil Kinnock's former press officer and deputy chair of the commission for social justice. Ms Hewitt is now Labour MP for Leicester West.

The links between the firm and the party grew stronger. A year ago the *Sunday Times* revealed that a series of seminars at Templeton College, Oxford, had been organised for Labour frontbenchers — by Andersen Consulting. Under the dynamic leadership of £300-an-hour Liam Byrne, the Andersen team groomed and coached more than 100 Labour leaders in the art of government. Andersen's was shy about how much it was paid, admitting only that the seminars had been "commercial". Andersen Consulting told the *Eye* that Mr Byrne had left the firm soon after the general election, though it would not say where he went.

As soon as Labour was elected, the clouds lifted on the tangled mess of Arthur Andersen's battle with the government. In the settlement, achieved after only seven months, Andersen's has paid out £18m, chicken feed compared to the cost of the US trial which was to have been heard in January and whose revelations about the Swiss-based Panamanian-registered GPD would have done terrible damage to the spotless reputation of Arthur Andersen.

PS: The Commons announcement of the settlement, in a brief reply to a planted written question on a Friday, was made by the minister of state for Northern Ireland, Adam Ingram, a former colleague of Patricia Hewitt in Neil Kinnock's office.



COLIN WALLACE: The Clockwork Orange Man

MAN OF STRAW

■ THE panic in MI5 at the revelations of former agent David Shayler continues unabated as Shayler threatens to spill more of his juicy beans.

Shayler is said to be smarting at the denials of John Lander, head of MI5, that MI5 kept files on Peter Mandelson for his Communist youth and Jack Straw for his dangerous views as an officer of the National Union of Students.

Some support for Shayler's allegation about Jack Straw comes from Colin Wallace, the former army intelligence officer who masterminded a secret black propaganda operation against the Labour government in 1974. The operation, codenamed Clockwork Orange, was based on series of briefing papers prepared by Wallace from "information" which was fed to him by MI5.

The papers were carefully stored by Wallace in a file which he kept in his office at army headquarters at Lisburn, and showed on a "strictly non-attributable" basis to journalists, especially correspondents from abroad. The political tone of the papers, which were typed by an MI5 officer and which clearly date from 1974, is the demented drivel which inspired MI5 officers like Peter Wright, author of *Spycatcher*. One of the central aims of the papers was to smear the entire Labour party and most of the Tory party with Communism or subversion or both.

One paper was entitled COMMUNIST FRONT ORGANISATIONS IN ULSTER UNREST. In the section on students, there appears the following choice passage:

"Jack Straw is a hardline revolutionary socialist. As a member of the National Union of Students, he publicly supported motions in favour of British withdrawal from Northern Ireland and the end of American involvement in Vietnam."

It is more than a fair bet that something of the kind can still be found in Jack Straw's file in MI5 which, although he is the secretary of state in charge of MI5, he cannot see.

Bum-Cooper up the Lane

CAN there be the slightest coincidence between the following facts?

1 Sir Louis Blom-Cooper, the celebrated liberal lawyer, has just published a book about the Birmingham Six which seems to suggest that the Six were guilty after all of the pub bombings although their 1975 convictions were quashed in 1991.

2 Sir Louis Blom-Cooper, the celebrated liberal lawyer, once wrote a book arguing that James Hanratty was guilty of the A6 murder. He has recently repeated this view in the *Spectator*.

3 Ever since his early days at the bar, Sir Louis Blom-Cooper has been a fervent admirer of the former lord chief justice, Lord Lane.

4 Lane was junior prosecuting counsel in the A6 murder trial at Bedford in 1962 when Hanratty was convicted.

5 Lane presided over the court of appeal hearing of the Birmingham Six case in 1987 and 1988. He contemptuously dismissed the appeals.

Some day the prints will come

IT'S been a bad year for Bob Stewart, former head of Staffordshire CID.

Earlier this year the court of appeal quashed the conviction of the four men convicted of killing the 13-year-old newspaper boy Carl Bridgewater in 1978 — Stewart being the officer in charge of the case.

THE STAFFORDSHIRE BRIGADE: Bob Stewart and Co, 1978

Important new evidence before the appeal court included two fingerprints on the bicycle of the murdered boy which did not fit the accused. The bike had clearly been handled by the murderer. An intensive fingerprinting exercise on all Carl's friends and family and anyone ever known to have handled the bike failed to identify the prints.

In a case currently before the court of appeal, Andrew Evans challenges his conviction for the murder of 14-year-old schoolgirl Judith Roberts in 1972. Stewart was second in charge of the case. Important evidence before the appeal court was a fingerprint on the bike of the murdered girl, which did not fit the accused. The bike had clearly been handled by the murderer. An intensive fingerprinting exercise on all Judith's friends and family and anyone likely to have handled the bike failed to identify the prints.

The news about the prints came very late in Evans's appeal, and caused the court to sit in special session on the morning of 21 November. Paddy O'Connor, Evans's QC, then told the court that there had been no reference to any fingerprints in either the used or unused bundles of witness statements available at trial and no reference in the summing up of Mr Justice Crichton to any such fingerprints.

Since 1994 Justice has been writing to the crown prosecution service asking for information about the fingerprints only to be repeatedly rebuffed. The CPS lawyer dealing with the case was Karen Wiseman, who was also in charge of the fingerprint evidence in the Bridgewater appeal. It was not until 19 November, during the appeal, that part of the police report showing that there was indeed an unidentified print on the bike was finally disclosed.

The judges, led by lord chief justice Bingham, retired to consider their judgment, which has been reserved.

HERTS FAILURE

■ THE deteriorating relations between the police and the crown prosecution services plunged to rock bottom in Hertfordshire when a complicated fraud case was abruptly dropped.

Three years' intensive work by an energetic young fraud squad officer, DC Peter Hunt, was thrown down the drain. Hunt's senior officer, Det Insp I.R. Foster, wrote to the creditors: "I thank you for your patience and I believe that we have been very badly let down by the prosecution system."

Three years ago, Graham Devonport and David Thompson were arrested and charged with fraudulent trading and conspiracy after a number of complaints from people who had invested money in a fashionable Premium Line ("phone-in-for-your-prize") company. Their investments, they alleged, were not producing the proper return.

DC Hunt worked long and hard at his investigation, and uncovered four properties, including a former public convenience in Richmond, which appeared to have been bought with the investors' money. The case was carefully prepared by CPS counsel (whose name the CPS won't disclose) and the trial was set down to start at St Alban's crown court on 3 November.

A few days before the case was due, the counsel-with-no-name was allocated another case and returned his brief. The papers went to another barrister, Mr Philip St John Stevens, who decided to drop it. On 3 November, Devonport pleaded guilty to managing a company while a bankrupt and was fined £2,500. No evidence was offered on the other charges, and the two men walked free.

A CPS spokeswoman told the *Eye*: "The decision to offer no evidence was taken in the full knowledge and agreement of police and counsel." (See DI Foster above).

High Principals

NOTHING UNTO WARD 3

■ THE revelations in the *Eye* and the *Times Educational Supplement* about Roger Ward, dynamic chief executive of the Association of Colleges (AOC), were passed round with outrageous enthusiasm at the AOC's annual conference at Harrogate.

The AOC's board of governors hastily commissioned an inquiry from McKeag & Co, a firm of solicitors based in Gosforth, with a branch office in Newcastle to conduct it. AOC chairman Howard Phelps told the *Eye* that McKeag's had been nominated since they were "a firm of some repute".

Newcastle, he went on, "is a very proud and professional part of the world and there are a lot of people there." Mr Clive McKeag, of McKeag & Co, strenuously defended his firm's ability to carry out the inquiry "in a totally unbiased fashion".

EVERSHEDS EVER SHED

■ WHILE the AOC hires one firm of solicitors, it falls out with another... In August this year Roger Ward circulated his members with the shock news that he had sacked Eversheds, the second biggest law firm in the country, which previously enjoyed the lucrative contract to represent AOC and all its member colleges.

Ward's letter was closely followed by another from John Hall, a senior partner of Eversheds and its top education expert. "Shortly after the launch of Eversheds Education Consultancy services last month," he wrote, "Eversheds received a letter from the AOC stating that the service put Eversheds into a direct conflict of interest with the AOC and terminating our retainer. This was a surprise since I had discussed our proposals with the AOC last autumn and had no indication that the AOC had any objection."

The *Eye* rang Mr Hall to discuss these matters, but he was not available. Questions were answered instead by a public relations consultant representing Eversheds, who had some surprising information. "Mr Hall used to be company secretary of AOC and its predecessor CEF," she said. "He was not on the board. He resigned as company secretary on April 18th."

Why did he resign? At first the spokeswoman was anxious not to comment. Later, she came back with a remarkable explanation. "Mr Hall had a number or concerns that remained unresolved including clarity of his role as company secretary and issues of corporate governance such as the endorsement of suppliers to the further education sector."

THE EYE HAS IT

■ The AOC conference was addressed by the chief executive of the Further Education Funding Council, Professor David Melville. The professor told the delegates to improve their governance and their image.

"My advice to you all," he concluded, "is follow the guidelines and use your commonsense! If in doubt about any action, run it first as a headline in the *Private Eye* `High Principals' column."

THE DOCTOR'S DILEMMA

■ THE current communique to staff at Luton University on 12 November is introduced by Dr Tony Wood, the vice-chancellor.

The communique advertises "full private health insurance via a group scheme arranged with Norwich Union health care".

FACT TO REMEMBER: The versatile Dr Wood doubles up as chairman of the Bedfordshire health authority, the main purchaser of health care in the county.

You can write to Paul Foot at 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG, or leave a message for him on 0171 287 3183

In the City

THE department of Timidity & Inaction is about to justify its unflattering nickname with publication this week of the Guinness report. The long wait is likely to disappoint anyone expecting the naming and shaming of those who participated in the City's greatest ever greed-driven feeding frenzy.

Fear of legal action or old age — the report was largely completed nine years ago — have resulted in most of the report's teeth being pulled, leaving what is expected to be a tame and rarely judgemental account of events that are well known to all who followed the fall out from Guinness's 1986 takeover of Distillers.

Hefty swipes at many of the great and the bad of the City contained in the interim report, which helped launch the four Guinness criminal trials, are likely to have turned into pulled punches. This, it would seem, is the price of getting the report published at all. But it is a poor return for the taxpayer who has enriched David Donaldson QC and accountant Ian Watt plus their little helpers to the tune of £3.15m.

The Guinness report is one of the last of its kind. Not surprisingly such marathon investigations are out of fashion. We are still awaiting the report begun in 1992 into the fraudulent 1990 flotation of Mirror Group Newspapers by the great pension pillager Robert Maxwell. Given the Maxwell acquittals it would seem Kevin & Co may also have little to fear as and when that report is published.

Unlike the last similar report — into the phoney pharaoh Mohamed Fayed's takeover of House of Fraser (begun later but published sooner due to the absence of criminal proceedings) — the DTI inspectors seemingly have not seen it as their role to pronounce verdicts on anyone other than former Guinness chief executive Ernest Saunders.

Donaldson and Watt are expected to reject the usual style of critical conclusions on those held to have behaved badly. Instead, their attitude may be to let convictions speak for themselves and where there are no convictions to stay largely silent.

Saunders alone is expected to be singled out for damning as a serial liar and a would-be thief by the DTI inspectors who perhaps feel that after his "recovery" from Alzheimer's disease he needed reminding of exactly what he knew and did. "Alzheimer" was unlikely to be given any favours by the inspectors after his relentless attack on their interviewing of him and his use of their right to make him tell a whole raft of lies to attack his conviction via the European Court of Human Rights. Those since 1990 who have been suckered into believing Saunders' story of how he was a victim of his advisers and then of injustice will now see why the court of appeal considered he was more than rightly convicted and why even the Strasbourg court was unprepared to say he was innocent.

Saunders is expected to be accused of being corrupted by greed and envy, so desperate to win that he would do and pay anything to defeat rivals Argyll. The result was to spray Guinness's money round the City in an inexcusable as well as illegal way to boost the crucial Guinness share price. But it is not expected that the inspectors will repeat their interim report call for Saunders to be banned from being a company director!

The speculation is that the other players may get off lightly, even Saunders' trusted adviser, American lawyer and Guinness director Tom Ward, who refused to answer the inspectors questions — a criminal offence for which he could be imprisoned if he returns to Britain. Unlikely after he was acquitted in 1993 of a charge upon which Saunders had been convicted, the theft of £5.2m which he and Saunders were to share. "Alzheimer" was to take £3m but lost his nerve when an investigation seemed likely.

What of the other Guinness players whose names have appeared here so often over the past decade?

Gerald Ronson, Anthony Parnes and Jack Lyons (illegal share supporters convicted with Saunders in 1990): likely to be seen as little more than overly greedy and excessively rewarded by their £5m and £3m fees.

Roger Seelig (acquitted when his trial collapsed in 1992 due to his inability to continue representing himself): severely criticised initially by the inspectors, Seelig is expected to get a much easier ride now apart from a few attacks on his honesty. A similar detuning is likely of the criticisms of Seelig's bosses at Morgan Grenfell — Christopher Reeves, Graham Walsh and David Ewart — who helped cover up the merchant bank's key role in the support operation and were blamed initially for trying to dump on Roger.

Lord Spens (Seelig's ally at Henry Ansbacher and acquitted co-defendant): one of the few to escape the inspectors' interim wrath, it is likely little has changed.

David Mayhew (charges against the Cazenove partner were dropped in 1991): subject of criticism in the interim report unlikely to be repeated other than as to his truthfulness.

Lord (Jacob) Rothschild (a leading player in the support operation): unlikely to be criticised for other than his preparedness to spend almost £30m on Guinness shares to cosy up to Cazenove and Morgan Grenfell. The report is unlikely to explain why Saunders told people — "Jacob owes me one". But then Saunders is a liar.

Elliott Bernerd (Seelig ally and recruiter of "Black Jack" Dellal's sister Violet Seulberger-Simon for the support operation): expected to have little reason to fear the report will hinder his bid for a peerage in return for good works.

Ephraim Margulies (recruited by Parnes for the support operation and fortunate to escape prosecution): likely to get his lumps, especially over trying to cover up the £3m he was paid, because as he died in August the inspectors might retain their courage.

The City: it is likely to get a bad report from the inspectors for allowing greed to persuade too many white shoe firms that the share support operation was not illegal and immoral and resorting to lies and fabricated evidence to cover-up their actions.

All in all a bad day at the office for those involved, but it is all a long, long time ago and for most of the Guinness players, even Saunders, it is still business as usual.

MEANWHILE Saunders' defender and former fellow Guinness director Lord Moyne, aka Jonathan Guinness, is heading for similar problems over misusing company cash.

The Swedish investigation into what happened to £49m spirited out of investment company Trustor has revealed a crude fraud with Moyne as its front man. Moyne broke his silence from Ireland to claim he was duped by his Swedish associates — Joachim Posener, Peter Mattson and Thomas Jisander — and would return to face the Swedes. But he would, wouldn't he — especially as Posener is on the run, probably to Israel, and the others are in custody.

What seems to have happened at Trustor is that trusty favourite: buying a company with its own money. A scam so old it has been illegal since section 54 of the companies act 1948. This was revised into section 151 of the current act which sent Saunders to jail — one more reason Moyne should have realised what was going down. After all, you don't forget you don't have £20m!

Moyne now admits he did not buy a controlling stake in Trustor with his own money as he claimed. Instead the £20m probably came from Trustor's account at Barclays via Jisander's account at the same branch. The £32m "loan" made to Moyne through a Cayman brass plate, International Trade & Credit Bank, appears to have been part of the smokescreen. This was supposed to buy a Moyne company Bancorp which was then to be sold on to Trustor. The over-valuation looks designed to fill the £20m hole at Trustor created by lending Moyne the price of the initial stake.

As a financial sophisticate and former merchant banker, Moyne may find it hard to explain why he did not spot this obvious scam, a bigger version of one Posener pulled off previously in Denmark. Posener had only been out of jail three months when he and Moyne did it again.

"I could go to jail," admits Moyne. How very true.

'Slicker'

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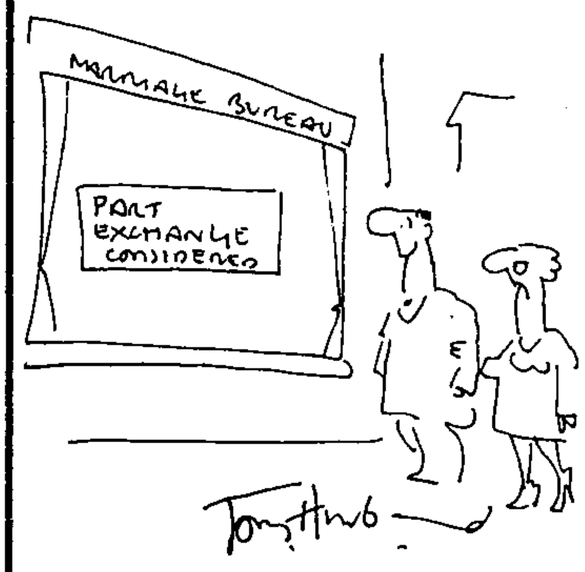

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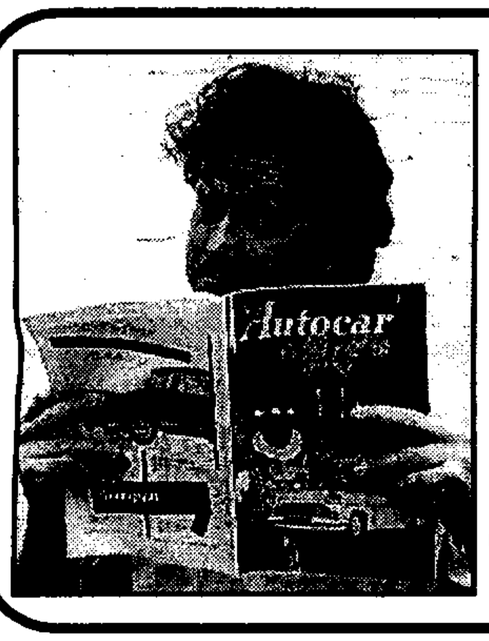

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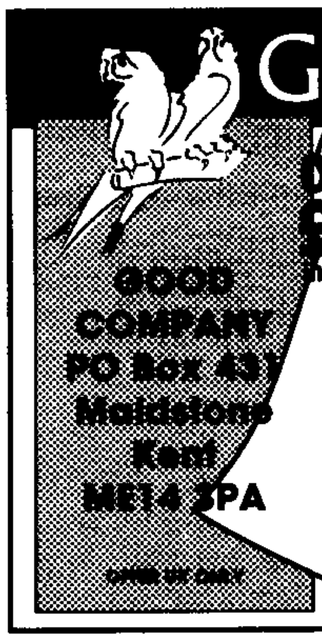

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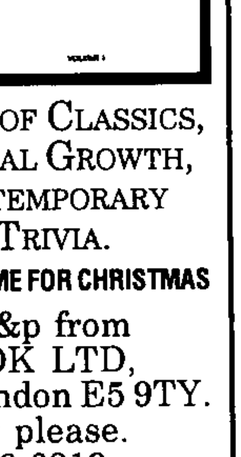

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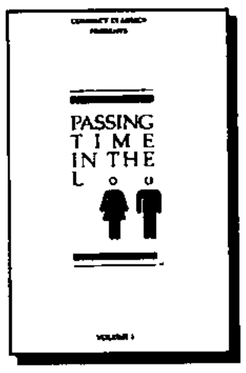

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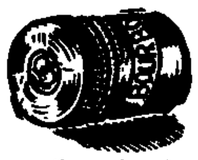

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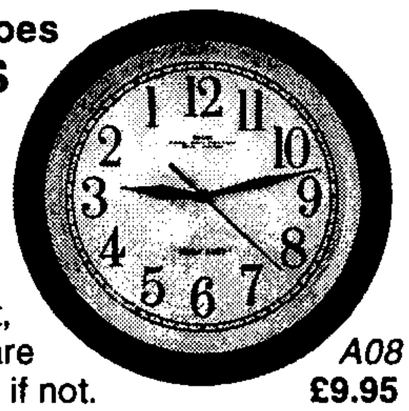

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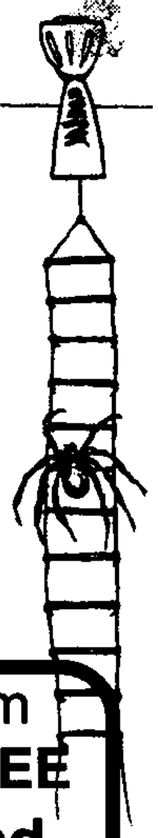

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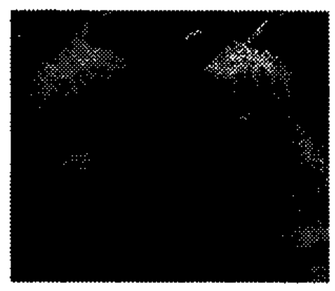

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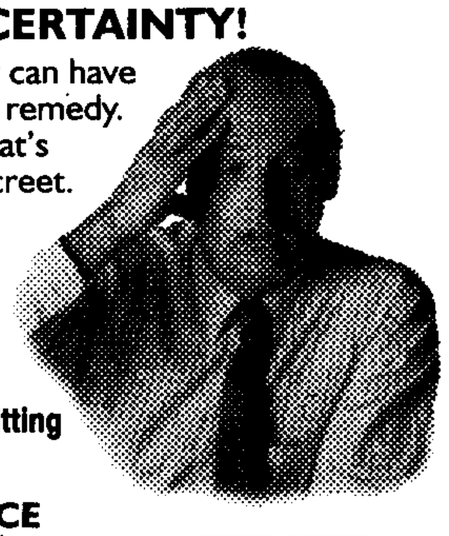

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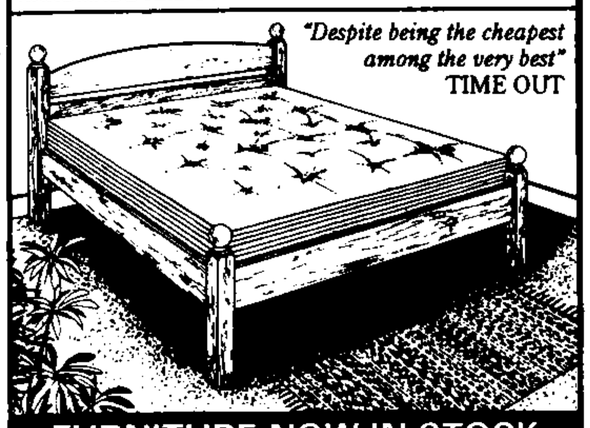

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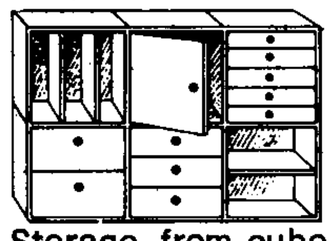

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